

Money Matters – A Cross-National Study of Economic Influences on TV News

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Abstract

This dissertation examines how economic factors on the level of media organisations and on the level of media systems and media markets influence news content on TV channels. Using content analysis data from 22 TV channels in eleven countries, the study investigates whether TV channels subjected to high economic pressures display a lower news performance with regard to news topics, news diversity and sensationalist reporting. Results are obtained by fuzzy set Qualitative Comparative Analysis, a method which provides a middle path between case-oriented qualitative research and variable-oriented quantitative approaches and is thus highly appropriate for the research goal and data base of this study.

The main results show that economic pressure indeed exerts a negative influence on news performance. News performance of public service channels depends on the market environment that the channels operate in and on the extent of their dependency on advertising revenues: public service channels with comparatively high ratings (and thus high popularity among the audience) also display a higher news performance than public service channels in countries with a weak PSB presence. Compared with public service channels with a high advertising dependency, public service channels which derive their revenues mostly from license fees or state subsidies offer news that is characterized by topics with high social relevance and a low degree of sensationalism. In addition, the results suggest that a commercialized market environment has a negative influence on quantity of and diversity in foreign news coverage. Commercial ownership also has a negative influence on news performance; commercial TV channels tend to neglect topics of socially high relevance and to display a highly sensationalist style of reporting.

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1 Introduction

On March 2nd 2008, Dmitry Medvedev was elected the third Russian president with an overwhelming majority of 71% of the votes. The election of the Vladimir Putin's protégé made it to the lead story in the main evening news bulletins on the German public channel ARD as well as on the Swiss German-language channel SF. In both newscasts, a taped and edited correspondent package was aired, followed by an interview with the respective channel's foreign correspondent based in Moscow who gave more background information on the fairness of the elections and criticism raised by the Russian opposition. In the USA, the election story was also covered in NBC's *Nightly News* and PBS's *NewsHour with Jim Lehrer*, but much less prominently and extensively. In the Chilean main evening newscasts *24 Horas* and *Meganoticias*, there was no report on the Russian presidential elections at all.

A few weeks earlier, on January 22nd 2008, the Australian actor Heath Ledger died from a combined drug intoxication in his apartment in New York. The story made it into the newscasts of both Chilean channels, with *Meganoticias* devoting four reports to the incident. The amount of coverage on both U.S. channels was comparable to that of the Russian presidential elections while the Swiss channel SF only aired a one-minute report and ARD ignored the story altogether. The question immediately raised by these anecdotes is whether the death of an admittedly talented actor deserves as much as or even more attention in the news media than the election of the new president of a country with a population of 142 million, a permanent seat on the UN Security Council and supposedly the largest stockpile of nuclear weapons in the world.

On a more general level, this is a question about news decisions made every day by journalists around the world: why do news editors working for one media organization pay more attention to news events of high human interest but rather low social relevance while editors at another organization largely ignore this kind of stories and focus instead on political and economic developments? The present study is an attempt to find an answer to this question. Scholars have tackled the question on how news is selected and reported in many different ways. The main theoretical approaches to the study of news include gatekeeping theory focusing on how news events are selected by gatekeepers on different levels, middle range theories on how news events are presented, e.g. news bias or framing,

and theories on news effects such as agenda-setting, cultivation analysis or the spiral of silence (Bonfadelli, 2003).¹

This study focuses on economic factors in the analysis of the production and content of news. Economics matters because news is now mainly a business. In Western democracies, most news organizations are private companies that sell news to produce profits and to maximize their company's value. However, news is also a public good indispensable in a democratic society because it provides citizens with knowledge about politics and other areas of civic concerns. The central importance of news is explained by Carpini and Keeter simply but elegantly:

“[...] democracy functions best when its citizens are politically informed. Factual knowledge on such topics as the institutions and processes of government, current economic and social conditions, the major issues of the day, and the stands of political leaders on those issues assists citizens in discerning their individual and group interests, in connecting their interests to broader notions of the public good, and in effectively expressing these views through political participation” (1996, p. 1).

News can only fulfil all these functions if it is provided in adequate quantity and quality. High quality news is however costly to produce but not always profitable. Thus, high quality journalism according to the criteria of serving the public interest and promoting active citizenship does not necessarily translate into economic success. In fact, until the 1970s, the U.S. networks did not consider their news operations as part of the business but as a major loss centre expected to deliver public service and generate prestige for the owners (Hamilton, 2004). In Western Europe, public service broadcasting used to be a political and cultural institution completely shielded from market forces (Humphreys, 1996). This is no longer the case, as market principles and economic considerations have come to be the driving force behind changes in Western media systems during the last decades and are continuing to exert powerful influences on news media.

This process has been termed commercialization of news. Commercialization processes involve major changes in media markets characterized by deregulation and privatization, leading to an increase in media concentration and the rise of large media conglomerates.

¹ These approaches have of course also been applied to the study of media contents other than news.

The introduction of new competitors – in the past commercial TV channels in Western Europe, cable and satellite channels in the USA and more recently the Internet – has led to unstable, competitive market conditions which cause news organizations to minimize operational costs and to orientate themselves toward demands on both advertising and audience markets. The general assumption is that these developments have led to a lower news performance across most news media. Large media conglomerates are now primarily owned by share holders who are supposedly not committed to social and democratic goals of news media but mainly interested in the financial performance of the media firm. News media operating in markets characterized by complexity and turbulence are supposedly not willing and able to attend to public functions when their survival is at stake. For these reasons, most scholars fear that media organizations disinvest in the newsroom and attempt to maximize success with the audience and advertisers at the neglect of public interest contents.

These concerns are currently more pressing than ever, given that the financial and economic crisis starting in 2008 has exacerbated the crisis that news media have already been facing for years, particularly in the USA. According to estimates by the Project of Excellence in Journalism (PEJ), in 2009, advertising revenues for U.S. news media would fall for the third consecutive year and the collapsing economy would double the revenue losses the news industry experienced the previous year (2009). Particularly newspapers are suffering, some have closed altogether while others have ceased print publication to exist solely online (Nichols & McChesney, 2010). The PEJ estimates that by the end of 2009, American newspapers may employ 25% fewer journalists than in 2001.

American journalists and scholars are looking for different ways to save and reconstruct journalism (e.g. Downie & Schudson, 2009; Nichols & McChesney, 2010). The probably most radical suggestion – compared to liberal U.S. standards – comes from Nichols and McChesney who propose government subsidies to “bail out” struggling commercial news media and primarily to support non-profit and non-commercial media. In fact, Nichols and McChesney seem to propose the creation of public service institutions protected from the ravages of the market not unlike public service broadcasting in Western European countries. The authors argue that journalism is a public good that needs “an institutional structure that comports with its status.” However, this argument only holds true if news media operating

in less commercialized market environments and facing lower economic pressures are indeed more able to produce high quality news.

In the present study, I attempt to test this argument by investigating whether economic influences indeed have an explanatory power toward news media's performance with regard to television news. In a nutshell, this study aims at comparing news performance by TV channels facing high economic pressures and those operating under lower economic pressures. Economic factors to be analyzed in this study refer to characteristics of the market environment in which TV channels operate and channel characteristics such as ownership and revenue structures. The analysis is carried out for eleven countries: Belgium, Canada, Chile, Germany, Israel, Italy, Poland, Portugal, Switzerland, Taiwan, and the USA. News performance of the most heavily viewed public and commercial TV channel in these countries is measured by an extensive content analysis. The results of the content analysis are then linked to characteristics of TV channels and TV markets in the countries in the sample to identify causal associations between economic factors and news performance.

Overview of the study

The remaining chapters of this study are structured as follows. Chapter 2 gives an introduction into the scholarly debate about commercialization of news media. Researchers from different theoretical backgrounds – communication researchers, media economists and political economists – have devoted much attention to the analysis of causes, forms and consequences of commercialization processes. The postulated negative consequences are then contrasted with empirical evidence on effects of commercialization processes on media organizations' performance which, more often than not, does not paint the same bleak picture. I conclude the chapter by presenting a multi-level framework which helps systematize different economic influences shaping news content.

In Chapter 3, I develop the overall research design of the present study. Economic factors measuring the degree of commercialization of the market environment in which TV channels operate and the degree of economic pressures coming from channel characteristics are derived from the literature review. Subsequently, I discuss which dimensions of news performance are to be analyzed and criteria according to which the eleven countries in the sample are selected. Finally, I present the research questions on economic influences on

three main aspects of news performance, namely topic coverage, news diversity and sensationalist reporting.

Chapter 4 is devoted to the discussion of the methodological steps required for the data collection and data analysis. First, I provide detail information on how the three aforementioned aspects of news performance are operationalized and how data on characteristics of TV channels and television systems deemed to exert influences on news performance are collected. Second, I present the method of qualitative comparative analysis (QCA) as the main analytical data analysis strategy to meet the challenges posed by the hierarchical data structure and sample size in this study which cannot be analyzed by conventional statistical analysis. As QCA has not yet found wide application in media and communication research, a detail description is given to enable researchers unfamiliar with the method to follow the data collection, data analysis and interpretation of the results.

Chapter 5 presents results obtained first by descriptive analyses of TV news content data and then in qualitative comparative analyses of potential relationships between economic influences and news performance. For each dimension of news performance under study, a separate QCA is conducted to identify economic factors associated with high or low performance regarding this aspect in order to answer the research questions formulated in Chapter 3.

The results found in these QCAs are discussed in more detail in Chapter 6 where I point out relevant cross-national patterns of association between characteristics of TV channels and television systems on the one hand and different aspects of news performance on the other hand. Comparative research, however, should not only identify cross-national patterns but also provide some insights into individual countries. Therefore, I provide more detailed background information on the television markets in the eleven countries in the sample. This information helps relate the main national results to the respective country's context and thus to make the results found for the respective TV channels more interpretable. The final chapter wraps up the main findings of the study, point out its major methodological strengths and limitations, and identifies promising future avenues of research.

2 Theoretical background

2.1 Commercialization of media

Economic influences on media are widely seen as the driving force behind changes in Western media systems during the last decades in a process that has been termed commercialization² (Altmeppen, 2006; Fortunato, 2008; Hamilton, 2005). On a macro, system level, these influences involve the extension of the rationalities of the economic system to other systems such as politics and culture, leading to a neoliberal media policy that favours the market as the best allocating system for the production and exchange of media products. On the meso level of organizations, economic influences are seen as the main reason behind the changing priorities of media organizations, so that financial concerns such as profit goals and cost considerations have become powerful influences on norms and practices in news production.

Commercialization of news, and along with it the much lamented “dumbing-down” of journalistic standards, is by no means a new or recent phenomenon (Croteau & Hoynes, 2001; Siegert et al., 2005). Until the development of a genuine mass circulation press, the newspaper industry in the USA and European countries was essentially a partisan press run primarily by political parties to achieve political goals, not economic ones (Barnhurst & Nerone, 2009; Hallin & Mancini, 2004; Schudson & Tifft, 2005). For different political, social and economic reasons, this partisan press has moved toward a commercial model. In the U.S. case, this shift away from political information and persuasion toward profit-making took place very early, roughly in the second half of the 19th century (Baldasty, 1992, as cited in Croteau & Hoynes, 2001; Hamilton, 2004). An increase in the number of potential readers due to rising literacy rate, a decline in paper prices, advancements in printing technology and

² In German, there are two terms referring to this process that have sometimes been used interchangeably: “Ökonomisierung” (“economization”) and “Kommerzialisierung” (“commercialization”) (Siegert, Meier, & Trappel, 2005). However, in recent years, there has emerged a consensus to refer to “Ökonomisierung” as a macro process, whereas “Kommerzialisierung” applies to changes on the meso level of media organisations (Altmeppen, 2006). As there is no English equivalent to “Ökonomisierung”, I will use the term “commercialization” throughout this study.

the declining cost of presses all rendered economy of scale more advantageous, favouring newspapers with higher circulation. The rise of advertising as a way to market goods became a major source of revenue for newspapers and thus also pushed newspapers to boost circulation, as a higher circulation paper is more attractive to advertisers to reach consumers. One way to reach higher circulation is to switch from partisan reporting to independent coverage, thereby drawing readers from all parties and allegiance (Hamilton, 2004). The new “catch-all” newspapers broadened the scope of coverage to include not only politics but also other areas such as sports, entertainment, and fashion. In the following era of “yellow journalism”, the U.S. newspaper industry became more competitive, as exemplified by the struggle for readers between William Randolph Hearst’s *New York Journal* and Joseph Pulitzer’s *New York World*. The result was a turn toward sensationalist reporting style, “full of inflammatory headlines and garish pictures, with stories that focused on sex and scandal” (Croteau & Hoynes, 2001, p. 50). In Europe, there have been warnings since the 19th century by prominent scholars such as Karl Marx and Max Weber against conceptualizing the press as an entirely commercial institution, as this would jeopardize its public service mission (Siegert et al., 2005).

These historical developments, however, go beyond the scope of this study which focuses on commercialization processes that have been shaping Western media systems during the last decades. It is impossible to provide a precise date but we might use the classification suggested by Picard and his research team (2001).³ Thus, *commercialization* in this study refers to the time period from 1970 to present, encompassing what the authors have termed “The Era of Commercialisation” and “The Era of Media Businesses”:

“The [Era of Commercialisation] delineates a period of development of commercial broadcasting and changes in the outlook of media owners and the structure of media markets that led to a more commercial approach to many print media. The [Era of Media Businesses] emerged through a significant change in attitude of media companies’ managers and investors that led to the blossoming of commercial

³ This classification has been made for the media system in Finland and hence can only be considered as a rule of thumb. Naturally, media systems in other countries have not developed synchronously to that in Finland and will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 6.2.

broadcasting and newspaper and magazine companies transforming themselves into media businesses.” (Picard, 2001, pp. 67-68)

In the following, I will review different approaches to the question of economic influences on media by a number of scholars in communication research, media economics and political economy. Some of these researchers explicitly refer to commercialization, some discuss this issue in other terms, such as market-driven journalism, but all are concerned with the growing importance of market principles and economic considerations for news media.

2.1.1 Communication research

European communication researchers tend to examine commercialization processes from a macro perspective. This might be explained by the fact that in Western European countries, as compared to the USA, news media have traditionally been seen as belonging primarily to the political and cultural system and less so to the economic system (W. A. Meier & Jarren, 2001). Otfried Jarren, for instance, defines commercialization as “the extension of the economic system to other systems which have hitherto been subject to other imperatives” (1998, as cited in W. A. Meier & Jarren, 2001, p. 146, translation by the author). According to Ulrich Saxer, commercialization of the media is characterized by the intensification of economic influences, particularly by the advertising industry, on structures and functions of media systems and their consequences for media production, media workers, processes of mediated communication and their audiences (1998). In this perspective, commercialization is a complex phenomenon that encompasses a system restructuring and affects media organizations, the media system as a whole, and society at large. This structural change is legitimized by the argument that market mechanisms are best able to provide a diverse supply of media products that can fulfil a variety of needs. At the heart of the commercialization of media systems is the increasing prioritization of economic success over public interest and welfare.

Denis McQuail’s earlier works on commercialization examined commercialization primarily in the context of (public) broadcasting in Europe (1986, 1998). Commercialization is connected to two kinds of pressure on communicators: first from the media organization’s profit orientation and second from (supposed) needs of the mass audience. The degree of commercialization can be determined along a continuum with two poles: on the one hand a

truly public-service broadcaster and monopolist whose primary goal is to serve the public interest and to cater for all citizens, on the other hand a purely commercial business organization. The move towards the “commercial pole” is characterized among others by a popularization of media products in response to the audience’s preferences, an increasing market-orientation (increasing cost consciousness and “entrepreneurial spirit”), growing dependence from advertising and sponsoring, and deregulation and privatization of communication services (1986).

As the “dual system” of competing private and public broadcasters has now been established in all European countries, the scope of research on commercialization has to be extended beyond (public) broadcasting. In the latest edition of his book on communication theory, McQuail defines commercialization as a “process by which media structures and contents come to reflect the profit-seeking goals of media industries and are too much governed by market considerations. The main reference is usually to cultural consequences, and these always have a negative connotation. [...] Commercial media are suspected of lacking full independence from their owners and advertisers.” (2005, p. 550).

According to Hallin and Mancini (2004), changes in European media systems can reasonably be seen as a shift toward the Liberal model of media systems with commercialization as the most powerful force behind this shift that has transformed both print and electronic media in Europe, leading to a homogenization of media systems. In Democratic Corporatist and Polarized Pluralist systems, party newspapers and other media formerly connected to organized social groups have declined in favour of politically neutral commercial papers whose primary purpose has changed from advocating their (previous) owners’ political views to making profits by delivering information and entertainment to consumers and consumers’ attention to advertisers. In both models, public service broadcasting has traditionally been strong, especially in the Northern European system. However, since the “commercial deluge” of the 1980s-90s, the former public service monopolies have been replaced by mixed systems in which commercial broadcasters have come to play a dominant role. In these mixed systems, “broadcasting has been transformed from a political and cultural institution in which market forces played a minimal role into an industry in which they are central, even for the remaining public broadcasters who must fight to maintain audience share” (p. 252). With the multiplication of channels, broadcasting services are regarded less

as a social institution or a public good, but rather as a commodity that could be chosen by individual consumers.

These works show that commercialization processes are seen in the context of Western European countries as a “system problem.” In contrast to the USA, where news media have always been institutionalized as private, commercial entities, Western European news media – print, radio and broadcasting – have traditionally been subjected to the political and cultural sphere. Due to commercialization processes, Western European media systems have increasingly come to be part of the economic system, with economic imperatives predominantly determining the institutionalization, diversification, production and consumption of media contents (W. A. Meier & Jarren, 2001). This argument can also be found in the discussion of “convergence of media systems” (Hallin & Mancini, 2004; Kleinsteuber, 2008).

In the USA, communication scholars tend to focus more on media organizations or news workers. One important aspect refers to the increasing influence of market and economic principles in journalistic operations, leading to changes in newsroom management when “green eyeshade” journalists are replaced by business managers (Underwood, 1993, 2001). For newspapers, two trends are responsible for the movement toward market-driven journalism: persistent declines in per capita circulation and readership and continual loss of advertising share to other media (Beam, 2003). Reacting to these two trends, news executives since the 1970s have come to embrace market-driven journalism, breaking down “the traditional walls between the news and business departments and work with their business-side colleagues to fashion the newspaper’s marketing strategy; and the newspaper has been redesigned with more graphics, pull-out boxes, and easy-to-read bulleted items to make it more ‘reader-friendly’” (Underwood, 2001, p. 99). Market-driven journalism means a turn away from the “professional model”, under which journalists’ professional values drive content decisions and provide for example news about government affairs, even if this kind of news is not always popular with the audience. The movement toward market-orientation entails three sets of actions: collecting and assessing readers’ needs and preferences, disseminating this market information throughout the news organization, and taking actions in response to this information (Beam, 2001). Under this market-driven model, content decisions will be made to accommodate the audience’s preferences for

“something else”, as measured via market-research. The assumption is that “readers prefer information on what might be called the ‘private sphere’—lifestyle, entertainment, recreation, ‘news to use’—and, therefore, market-oriented newspapers will provide it rather than provide public-affairs content” (Beam, 2003, pp. 373-374).

Increased bottom-line pressures are perceived as one major constraint on news workers’ professional autonomy as two recent surveys among U.S. journalists have shown (Project for Excellence in Journalism, 2008; Weaver, Beam, Brownlee, Voakes, & Wilhoit, 2007). Business and financial concerns were mentioned by more than half of the respondents as the most important problem facing journalism, far more frequently than quality of coverage (22%) or loss of credibility (9%) (Project for Excellence in Journalism, 2008). Commercial imperatives affecting operations of news media take several forms: first, pressure from advertisers comes in form of direct attempts to shape news content or to induce self-censorship by journalists to avoid stories that might hurt their advertisers’ interest. Second, there is the need to make a commercially viable product, i.e. news that the audience would want. Finally, the respondents complained about a shortage in resources for making news, resulting in “workplace where too few people had too much to do” (Weaver et al., p. 80). In the survey conducted by Pew Research Center for the People and the Press and the Project for Excellence in Journalism, only about half of the journalists surveyed said their news organization’s top management gives higher priority to the public interest than to the organization’s financial performance. During the last decade, the proportion of journalists saying that increased bottom-line pressure is hurting the quality of coverage, not just changing the way news organizations operate, has grown dramatically from roughly one-third in 1995 to more than two-thirds in 2007. This finding is corroborated by Weaver et al.’s study which found that journalists who perceived their organizations to emphasize high, above-average profit and to prioritize profits over good journalism or where newsroom resources were shrinking rated their employer’s journalistic performance significantly lower. Conversely, journalists who said their news organizations value journalism of high, above-average quality and high employee morale were more likely to rate their organization’s success in informing the public higher. A survey among European journalists shows the same phenomenon: according to the study by Preston, there is a “widespread view that competition, commercialisation and market-centred policies have become increasingly

powerful influences on journalism's values, norms and practices over the past 15 to 20 years" (2009, p. 46).

In sum, there seem to be two different approaches to commercialization within communication research. The European approach is rather theoretical in nature and more concerned with commercialization as a meta-process that takes place on a macro, systemic level. This approach deals primarily with questions of how media systems are constituted, of system rationalities, of structural changes within media systems and how these are related to broader changes in politics and society. U.S. researchers, in contrast, are more interested in commercialization processes on the meso and micro level of media organizations and news workers, respectively. This strain of research tends to employ empirical methods to address questions of changes in newsroom management, how these have affected operations and content priorities in news organizations, and how journalists cope with the need to balance journalistic values with different constraints on their professional autonomy.

2.1.2 Media economics

Media economics is concerned with "the changing economic forces that direct and constrain the choices of managers, practitioners and other decision-makers across the media" (Doyle, 2002, p. 2). Whereas (other) communication researchers mostly discuss the process of commercialization and its consequences in normative terms, media economists apply economic principles to analyze commercial influences on news production. They employ concepts such as structure of and competition within media markets, cost structure of media production, economy of scale, economy of scope, and characteristics of media goods to investigate and explain changing strategies, priorities, and performance of media organizations.

Macroeconomic approaches look at the process of commercialization from the perspective of communication policy and media markets. In this perspective, commercialization can be seen in the context of neoliberal communication policy as the increased orientation towards the market as the best allocating system (Grisold, 2001). Media policy thus has only one goal, namely to ensure a functioning competition, relying on positive self-regulating mechanisms of the market. This change in media policy does not only apply to mass media,

but also to many other areas such as education or health care (Siegert, 2003). Commercialization means that “market-orientated attitudes and behaviours have gained a growing influence in areas formerly not governed by the market – with relevant consequences on macro, meso and micro level” (ibid, p. 20, translation by the author).

A communication policy that favours market competition as the main regulatory instance leads to an encompassing deregulation of media industries, especially of telecommunications and broadcasting (Heinrich, 2001a, 2001b). This market orientation brings about an increased profit orientation on the part of media organizations. If these changing orientations lead to an increase in efficiency and decreasing prices, then they can be considered as positive. However, as cost structures in the media industries favour economies of scale and economies of scope and due to specific characteristics of media goods, media markets tend to skip toward concentration as the most efficient market form. Because of these characteristics of media markets, relying only on markets mechanisms will inevitably lead to (partial) market failure as the market functions allocative and productive efficiency, control and innovation do not completely apply to media markets (Siegert, 2003).⁴ Hence, a communication policy based purely on competition policy will not yield the intended results. On the contrary, commercialization leads to increased competition, increased market concentration and an extension of the value-added chain, e.g. the extension of advertising to other forms such as sponsoring or product placement, the increase of merchandising and of multiple use of media content (Heinrich, 2001a, 2001b). A strictly economic competition accounts only for consumers’ preferences and costs of

⁴ Allocative and productive efficiency are limited on media markets for the following reasons: for advertising-financed media, the advertisers’ preferences are of greater importance than the audience’s wants and needs. Media use is largely a habitual behaviour and not a rational purchase decision as for other goods and due to the audience’s limited ability to evaluate media output’s quality, media market show the tendency toward adverse selection so that high-qualitative products are squeezed out of the market by media products of lower quality. The controlling function of media markets refers to the fact that market participants are normally expected to control each other and hence reduce each other’s market power. This function is also restricted on media markets as most markets, particularly content providing and content marketing markets, are oligopolies that enable reciprocal orientation or even collusions. As for the function of promoting innovation, media markets also pose difficulties because innovative strategies are economically risky due to high fix costs and high first-copy costs so that imitative product strategies are more profitable than innovations.

production, success is measured via economic criteria such as profitability or shareholder values. With regard to media products, commercialization causes the “replacement of socially desirable, merit media goods with marketable, micro economically profitable media products” (Kiefer, 2001, p. 21, translation by the author). Success is thus defined only in economic terms, while journalistic success becomes less important.

Whereas macroeconomics is concerned with the macro level of media policy and media markets, microeconomics analyzes individual products and firms (Doyle, 2002). With regard to media organizations, commercialization becomes manifest most clearly in those organizations whose goals of maximizing profits and shareholder values are to be achieved by realizing allocative and productive efficiency (Heinrich, 2001b; Siegert et al., 2005). A rise in allocative efficiency means producing those contents that are preferred by the audience and the advertising industry. Media organizations receive income from both media users and advertisers with varying ratio depending on the type of media or the individual media outlet. In some cases such as free newspapers or commercial broadcasting, advertising constitutes the only stream of revenue for the respective media outlet. Advertisers buy space in newspapers or broadcasting time according to results of their media planning in order to reach specific audience groups. As a consequence, audience research and advertising friendly coverage have a significant influence on editorial and programming decisions: the emphasis is placed on creating commercially viable products (instead of producing media contents of excellent quality) by means of employing market research and branding strategies (Altmeyden, 2001). It goes without saying that high quality media contents might also bring economic success. However, satisfying the audience’s preferences supposedly leads to more entertainment programming or blending of news content with entertaining features (“infotainment”). Responding to advertisers’ needs also proves to be a problem because news coverage and the target audience will be defined according to these needs and not according to journalistic criteria, resulting in advertising friendly journalism (Heinrich, 2001b, p. 162).

Increasing productive efficiency, on the other hand, aims at reducing production costs. This is because from a simple business operations perspective, cost minimization is a straightforward way to boost profits. Media firms have a range of possibilities to cut costs through means such as introduction of profit centres and cost-oriented newsroom

management (media controlling), employing freelancers, outsourcing complete production phases and multiple use of media contents (which are characterized by very high first copy costs by comparison to other industries). Another example for a commercialized strategy is to pursue imitative product strategies to participate in other, innovative programmes' success instead of creating a unique selling point such as the organization's reputation for quality (Altmeyden, 2001). Potentially negative consequences of efforts to minimize costs of production are "cheap journalism" (which results from a cost-benefit calculation), "buying journalism" (which relies on externally produced contents whose quality cannot be controlled), and "cascade journalism", i.e. the repeated use of the same contents (pp. 162-164). In a nutshell, a commercialized organization will pursue strategies that are likely to realize economic success; strategic choices involving high journalistic quality are increasingly on the wane.

Media organizations or journalists that follow an economic model of news selection rather than public service logic thus produce market-driven news. According to McManus, commercialization of news can therefore be seen as "any action intended to boost profit that interferes with a journalist's or news organization's best effort to maximize public understanding of those issues and events that shape the community they claim to serve" (2009, p. 219). In his market-based model of news production (1994, 1995), he analyzes the relations between the news departments of media firms and their investors/owners, advertisers, sources and consumers. He argues that the markets for investors, advertisers and sources all serve both themselves and the media firm. However, the market for consumers is characterized by market failure, resulting in a negative consequence for society. Due to irrational or rationally ignorant behaviour of news consumers, market-concentration leading to fewer or no choice among different news providers, and the nature of news as a credence good, news consumers are much more vulnerable to opportunism on the part of media firms than investors, advertisers or sources. Commercialized news organizations that are inclined to follow the economic model of news selection thus will provide news that is less valuable to citizens for several reasons: First, most "newsworthy" news is expensive to uncover and report. Second, news that might harm advertisers' or the parent corporation's interests will be avoided and third, advertisers, who contribute the majority of news organizations' revenues, may want to reach only a specific part of the

audience. Market-driven editors thus will commit more resources to reach these audience members at the cost of neglecting those who are not of interest to advertisers. McManus concludes that “for mass-mediated news supported by advertising, achieving the greatest return requires a subordination of most journalism norms to market norms” (1995, p. 327).

Commercialization can also be viewed in terms of conflicting goals of commercial media firms (Altmeyden, 2001; Picard, 2005). On the one hand, these firms are expected to serve their economic self-interests to produce profits and to maximize their company’s value. On the other hand, they are also expected to serve a variety of social goals such as to produce diverse and pluralistic media content that help citizens to participate in and carry out their social responsibilities in society. This implies an inherent tension between these two objectives, as “commercially funded media require financial resources and strength to sustain and nurture their activities, but they cannot fully pursue their economic self-interests without harming optimal public service. Optimal service can thus be achieved only if firms temper their self-interests or if legal and regulatory actions require them to do so” (Picard, 2005, p. 338). The performance of media firms in maintaining a balance between these two conflicting goals has skewed toward the commercial end, as economic criteria of capitalism have increasingly come to dominate media organizations’ orientation and behaviour, so that more commercial firms are willing to overtly act in their own self-interest and profit goals take precedence over journalistic goals.

According to Picard, the reasons for this development are to be found in market changes, in changing ownership of media, and in the case of newspapers, the growing dependence on advertising as a source of revenue. Picard cites market changes as the strongest driver of media behaviour: financially secure media firms operating on stable markets tend to be more willing to temper their self-interests and to attend to public functions than media operating in a media environment characterized by market complexity and turbulence, so that their survival is at stake (2008).

Picard illustrates this argument with the development of television news in the USA (2008): in the 1950s and 1960s, network news and public affairs coverage were not considered part of the business of television, profits were made with entertainment, and news were more or less a cost of broadcasting, expected to deliver public service and generate prestige for owners still active in company affairs (cf. also Hamilton, 2004). Due to growing funding by

advertisers, the network evening news became financially beneficial to the networks in the 1970s, attracting more broadcasters to providing news, particularly local news. The increasing competition between networks, local stations, and cable channels in the 1980s and 1990s has reduced profitability of all TV news operations and created market instability and hence caused a commercialization of content and movement away from public affairs coverage. This trend is still continuing, as today's market environment for print and television news is characterized by more market complexity and turbulence than ever before (Picard, 2008).

The commercialization of U.S. newspapers is a good illustration of the development triggered by increasing dependence on advertising and changing ownership (Picard, 2004). Because of the explosive growth of advertising after World War II and the policy to maintain low prices (to produce mass market sales), newspapers increasingly shifted their operation costs from readers to advertisers. Today, U.S. newspapers depend on average for more than 80% of their revenues on advertising (ibid.). As this dependence on a single source of revenue within a uncertain and changing market environment is risky, newspaper firms have pursued strategies of diversification into new activities and revenue streams. These strategies of growth and diversification, however, have forced newspaper companies to depend on the stock market and financial institutions for capital ("going public"). Today, the primary stockholders of newspapers and other media firms are banks, investment houses and pension funds without a history of journalism involvement. These investors, as well as advertisers, are primarily interested in the financial performance of the media firm and do not exhibit much interest in content quality and meeting social and democratic goals of news media. These commercial and business changes have made various attempts to "turn newspapers into market-, reader-, or customer-driven enterprises and to create cross-departmental teams to coordinate editorial, advertising and marketing activities" (ibid., p. 55).

2.1.3 Political economy

The research tradition of political economy of communication focuses on the intersection of media and communication systems and the broader social structure of society. Its goal is to "trace the impact of economic dynamics on the range and diversity of public cultural

expression, and on its availability to different social groups” (Murdock & Golding, 2005, p. 62). A review of the literature on political economy of communication reveals five main research themes: media ownership and its societal effects, the role of media corporations in shaping the general character of societies operating in a "monopoly capitalism" framework, the impact of media practices upon people and perceptions, the issues of class divisions according to levels of access to communication technologies, and the theme of democracy in terms of how distorted information undermines basic political freedoms (Graham, 2006).

The bulk of studies focus on issues of media ownership and its societal effects, both in terms of economic power and political power that concentrated media ownership confers on media corporations.⁵ One prominent author in this strand of research is Ben Bagdikian who has been documenting the concentration of ownership of media companies since the 1980s. In his widely cited book “The Media Monopoly” which has gone through seven editions, Bagdikian chronicled the rise of media corporations that was putting more and more media companies in fewer and fewer hands with each new merger. In the first edition in 1983, there were fifty dominant media corporations. In each new edition, the number of global firms controlling most informational media dropped down to five media conglomerates in the 2004 edition which has been renamed „The New Media Monopoly“. Bagdikian is concerned with how the „Big Five“ – Time Warner, Walt Disney Company, News Corporation, Viacom and Bertelsmann – have accumulated political power through their control over media and over how politicians are depicted to the voting public (2004). It is through this political power that media corporations ensure a political environment that is friendly to weakening minimum standards for public service in order to produce maximum corporate profit. This development in turn leads to a failure by the media to inform the public about significant political and social problems and thus to a weakening of democracy.

Another influential book that is widely cited in academic discussions of commercialization of the media is *The Business of Media* by David Croteau and William Hoynes (2001). The authors introduce two different frameworks which can be used to evaluate the performance of mass media: the “market model” and the “public sphere model”. Under the market

⁵ In the following, I will review three prominent examples that in my view contain most important points on economic influences on news media from a political economy perspective.

model, mass media are conceptualized as private companies selling media products to consumers with the primary purpose of generating profits for owners and stockholders, as these are the only instances to which mass media are accountable. The public sphere model, in contrast, envisages mass media as public resources serving the interests of citizens by providing them with “diverse, substantive and innovative content,” even if these contents are not always popular with the audience (p. 37). Under this model, mass media are accountable to the public and government representatives, as its primary purpose is to serve the “public interest,” i.e. to “promote active citizenship via information, education, and social integration” (ibid.).

The authors then apply these two conflicting models to analyze structural changes in the media industry, i.e. growth of media corporations resulting from horizontal integration, vertical integration, and globalization, and leading to concentration of ownership on an unprecedented scale. These structural changes, made possible by a lax regulatory environment and changing technologies (introduction of cable channels and proliferation of the Internet), are not an end in themselves, but only means for media corporations to pursue three general goals: to maximize profits, to reduce costs, and to reduce risk by controlling the market environment through reducing uncertainty and minimizing competition. From the market model perspective, growth, integration and globalization are logical developments in a changing media world, as media companies have to position themselves to adapt. Concentration of ownership is in this view the “natural by-product of a maturing industry” (2001, p. 103), which is today characterized by more media outlets and more competition than ever before, because companies in previously separated fields can compete with each other. All of this means “more choices and better media for consumers” (p. 105).

From the perspective of the public sphere approach, however, it is contended that more outlets do not mean more substantive, different contents. Croteau and Hoynes argue that contemporary mass media are neglecting the public interest ideal of providing diverse, innovative, substantive and independent media contents. The aforementioned structural and strategic changes have often led to media contents that are characterized by homogenization and imitation (imitating previous successes reduces costs associated with new products while profiting from known trends), declining localism (lost of local control and

local content), trivialization and sensationalism of entertainment programmes and news. Commercial constraints created by the primacy of profit concerns compel a production of news at lowest possible costs, causing journalists to eschew expensive investigative journalism and to rely instead on outside sources such as press conference, press materials, video press releases from PR and information offices of corporations and government agencies. The result is news that is “limited in its range of ideas, favouring those entities that have the resources to aid journalists in their work” (2001, p. 163). The authors draw an equally bleak picture for the effects of the media business on society, as commercially driven news media generally “address people as consumers and spectators, not citizens” (2001, p. 206). The recent developments described above have been beneficial to the younger and more affluent consumers – who are most attractive to advertisers – but not necessarily equally advantageous for the needs and interests of all citizens. The result of the media’s “growing hypercommercialism, the concentration of media ownership, and the increasing pressure to merge information with entertainment [...] is a diminished public sphere [...] and a weakened democracy” (p. 208).

How corporate media undermine effective democratic governance is also the main theme in the works by another prominent political economist, Robert McChesney. In *Rich Media, Poor Democracy* (2000), McChesney documents processes of conglomeration, monopolization and globalization of media that have become more subservient to the needs of capital than of the public. He traces these developments back to the rise of neoliberalism, a “market knows best” philosophy that serves to protect the interests of media corporations and to stifle a debate about the media ownership and hypercommercialism. This results in journalism losing its autonomy, as news content is driven less by reporters and more by the presumed entertainment tastes of the audience; content that empowers citizens and reports critically on government and corporate power is rare. Citizens, thus disempowered and disenfranchised, eventually lose their interest in politics and become lulled into an indifference to (or cynicism about) political participation. McChesney rejects the neoliberal proposition that media markets are functional in “giving people what they want” (2004). As advertisers are the media’s most important customers, it is not the audience’s interests that are served but these must be first filtered through the demands of advertisers. Markets favor the more wealthy customers, resulting in marginalization of the poor and the working

class because of their undesirability as a market for advertisers. Finally, markets encourage uniformity since every producer plays to the lowest common denominator of consumer preferences in order to maximize audience while minimizing production costs.

2.2 Consequences of commercialization

Although there is no widely agreed upon definition of commercialization of the media and approach to examine this phenomenon empirically, there seems to be some consensus in the existing research literature. There is a consent that commercialization processes stem from growing economic influences. On a macro level, commercialization of media systems is their subordination under rationalities of the economic system whose success criteria of economic profitability and efficiency increasingly superimpose journalistic criteria of promoting active citizenship and democratic control. The rise of a neoliberal approach to media markets and media policy also entails deregulation of the media environment, relaxing ownership and antitrust provisions and hence enabling media companies to grow to vast conglomerates. On a meso level, economic influences within media organizations are the reason behind changing priorities of these organizations, so that profit goals and bottom-line pressures now take precedence over journalistic goals of providing high quality contents and serving the public interest. One main source of economic pressure comes from advertisers and media organizations' efforts to accommodate their advertising clients' interests, often at the expense of the journalistic credibility and integrity. Another main area where economic rationalization takes place is the media's increasing market-orientation, i.e. the tendency to give the audience what they want (as consumers) and not what they need in order to perform their democratic duties as citizens. A third argument concerning how economic forces have come to dominate business and journalistic decisions refers to cost cutting in the newsroom, again at the expense of quality journalism. As a result of these developments, commercialization processes are presumed to have consequences on media contents, and these consequences always have a negative connotation. In the following, I will present the most frequently mentioned consequences of commercialization in a systematic manner, referring to the aforementioned aspects.

2.2.1 Effects of media ownership

A lot of concerns have been expressed about the corporatization of the media, particularly by U.S. researchers (Bagdikian, 2004; Beam, 2002; Cranberg, Bezanson, & Soloski, 2001; Croteau & Hoynes, 2001; Downie & Kaiser, 2002; Hamilton, 2004; Lacy, 1991; McManus, 1994; Picard, 2004; Schmuhl & Picard, 2005; Underwood, 1993). The critics fear that media outlets that are part of large, publicly held corporations are more driven by profit and market considerations than independent media outlets since these corporations are accountable only to their share owners. Unlike media owners of the “old days”, who were involved in the operations of their organization and driven by considerations other than profits such as political influence, prestige, or altruistic motives of serving the public, share owners presumably only place emphasis on the bottom-line to the neglect of public interest content such as hard news and public affairs – contents that are usually more expensive to produce and thus generate less profits. Another common concern that is also related to the corporatization of the media refers to constraints restricting professional autonomy in news production (Bennett, 2005; Croteau & Hoynes, 2001; Siegert et al., 2005; Weaver et al., 2007). These constraints involve self-censorship and corporate censorship imposed on journalists to ignore or soften stories that are newsworthy in the public interest but might hurt the interest of the parent company, other parts of the parent company, or important advertisers. Such incidents of self- and corporate censorship sometimes result from conflicts of interest between different parts of the media conglomerate. One widely cited example of conflicts of interest negatively influencing media content is the drop of an ABC News investigative report on paedophilic workers at Disney theme parks (Disney bought Capital Cities/ABC in 1995), illustrating the loss of editorial freedom of the news division after being bought by a powerful global corporation. This kind of overt censorship, so it is feared by critics, will cause media workers to adapt to the new rules and “do’s and don’ts” (Bennett, 2005, p. 102), eventually resulting in self-censorship to avoid conflicts with their employers. Thus, corporate pressures will lead to less critical coverage of the media industry in general and parent companies in particular.

In the USA, where media markets are essentially local in nature, there is a widely expressed concern about loss of localism, i.e. loss of local control and local content, when media ownership passes from locally based owners to newspaper chains or television networks

that are part of large media conglomerates (Bennett, 2005; Croteau & Hoynes, 2001; Downie & Kaiser, 2002; Napoli, 2006; Picard, 2004, 2005; Yan & Napoli, 2006). Local owners are expected to be more knowledgeable in and responsive to the needs, interests, and values of the community they serve. Corporate owners and managers based at distant headquarters, in contrast, will not have the same knowledge of and the commitment to serving the community in which they own media outlets, since these constitute only tiny parts of their conglomerate. Loss of local ownership then will lead to loss of local content, so that coverage of local issues, local news and local voices are replaced by standardized and homogenized content. Stories and programming produced by one part of the newspaper chain or the broadcasting group can be fed to all newspapers in the chain or all radio stations in the group to realize cost efficiencies. This kind of content is however very unlikely to cover local news substantively.

For these reasons, there is a vast body of empirical research in the USA addressing the effects of ownership on media organizations' goals and content. A number of studies compared media content from outlets owned by public groups and from independent outlets (Lacy, 1991; Lacy & Fico, 1990; Lacy & Riffe, 1994; Napoli & Yan, 2007; Spavins, Denison, Roberts, & Frenette, 2002; Yan & Napoli, 2006).⁶ Stephen Lacy, a U.S. media economist, and his colleagues have repeatedly measured newspaper content and quality and examined their relationship to different forms of ownership. In a content analysis of a national sample of 114 newspapers for a constructed week in 1984 (Lacy & Fico, 1990), Lacy and his colleague tried to find systematic content differences between independent newspapers and those owned by private newspaper groups and publicly traded newspaper groups. The authors found no indication for a systematic impact of ownership on newspaper quality, measured by a news quality index.⁷ This index comprises eight categories indicating newspaper quality such as commitment to locally produced copy, amount of non-advertising copy, ratio of non-advertising to advertising space or number of interpretative and in-depth

⁶ Early studies in the 1970s and 1980s addressing the relationship of ownership and content are reviewed by Lacy, who comes to the conclusion that the "literature about effects of ownership on content is inconclusive" (1991, p. 38). In the following, I will review only more recent studies.

⁷ This quality index has originally been developed by Bogart's survey of 746 daily newspaper editors in 1977 (Bogart, 2004).

stories etc. No significant difference in news quality was found between independent newspapers and group newspapers, or between newspapers that are part of a private group and a public group, even if the effect of circulation is controlled for.⁸ Lacy and Fico concluded that “the systematic impact of type of ownership is limited and inconsistent. Whether a newspaper will have high or low quality seems to depend to a significant degree on the policy of the owners and the financial resources available to an individual newspaper.” (p. 52).

Based on the data of the same content analysis, Lacy also compared independent and group-owned newspapers with respect to the way management allocates news space, editorial space and organizational resources (1991). Again, there was no difference regarding the allocation of news space between newspapers under different types of ownership. Group newspapers even had larger staffs for a given amount of news space, indicating a greater financial commitment to the product.⁹ Lacy suggests that alternative explanations might lie not in differences between group and non-group newspapers, but in different organizational goals and marketing strategies, regardless of the ownership structure. Lacy and Riffe (1994) came to similar results in their study of the impact of group ownership on radio news. Group owned radio stations did not differ from independent stations in their financial commitment (as measured through the strength of full staff, numbers of reporters etc.) or in radio news content (as measured through the proportion of staff news that is local or proportion of time for staff reports).

Other researchers have conducted similar studies but with focus on local television in the USA. Spavins and colleagues (Spavins et al., 2002) carried out an analysis for the U.S. Federal Communications Commission in which they compared the performance between local television stations that are owned by one of the four largest broadcast networks (ABC, NBC,

⁸ Circulation might have a confounding effect on newspaper quality, as newspapers with larger circulation also have greater resources at hand that can be devoted to improve their quality.

⁹ The assumption hereby is that an increasing financial commitment will ultimately lead to increasing content quality, as journalists will have more time and resources to devote to creating content (Lacy, 1992).

CBS, and Fox) and stations that are affiliates of these networks.¹⁰ The network owned-and-operated stations produced a greater quantity of local news and public affairs programming than the affiliates stations and outperformed the affiliates significantly in terms of the number of awards given to them. As these awards might be seen as a surrogate for high quality performance as reviewed by industry peers, these results suggest that ownership by one of the four networks does not diminish, but enhance a station's performance.

Napoli and Yan addressed in two studies (Napoli & Yan, 2007; Yan & Napoli, 2006) a very similar research question and compared the amount of local news and local public affairs programming provided by 289 U.S. local television stations for a 2-week constructed sample.¹¹ Their results contradict Spavins et al.'s findings and seem to confirm some of the criticisms levelled at network ownership of television stations with regard to the loss of local content. In Napoli and Yan's analyses, network ownership is negatively related both to the probability of a station airing any public affairs programming, to the quantity of this kind of content provided by a station (Yan & Napoli, 2006) and to the likelihood of providing local news (Napoli & Yan, 2007). However, the authors also noted that the neglect of local affairs programming is not restricted to stations owned by the "Big Four", but is common to all commercial stations, whether these are locally owned or not (Yan & Napoli, 2006). Locally owned stations are more likely to air local news, but the amount of local news offered is neither related to local ownership nor to network ownership (Napoli & Yan, 2007). Local ownership of broadcast outlets is therefore not a guarantee for the provision of local news or local public affairs programming.

A different approach has been taken by a number of media economists who did not assess media performance in terms of content quality but examined the effects of public ownership on newsroom investment, economic and financial performance. One survey by Lacy and Blanchard found that publicly held newspapers produce higher profit margins than privately held papers, but have a smaller number of newsroom employees, indicating that publicly

¹⁰ A network affiliate is a television station that carries some or all of the programs the network provides, but is owned by a company other than the network.

¹¹ The authors explicitly referred to methodological shortcomings of the study conducted by Spavins et al. and made an effort to employ more rigorous sampling procedures and statistical analyses.

owned newspapers invest less in their newsrooms and thus ultimately in their editorial quality (2003). Three studies employing the same design (Blankenburg & Ozanich, 1993; Chang & Zeldes, 2002; Lacy, Shaver, & Cyr, 1996) examined how public ownership affects nine newspapers companies' emphasis on profit, their attentiveness to the equity market and whether they emphasize short-term return rather than long-term investment. The independent variable however, is not dichotomous (public vs. private), but operationalized via the degree of inside control, i.e. the percentage of voting stock held by officers and directors of the company.¹² The dependent variables are operationalized by strictly economic parameters such as the operating margin, cash flow, return on equity or the ratio of retained income to common equity. All three studies arrived at similar results: the higher the degree of outside control within a publicly owned newspaper company, the more it tends to emphasize profit, the more it caters to the equity market in order to provide earnings predictability and keep stock prices up, and the more it tends to pursue short-term returns at the expense of long-term investment. Blankenburg and Ozanich concluded that (traditional) newspaper owners holding stock of their companies comprise a special case under economic theory because they often operate in monopoly market so that they can ignore market forces and pursue goals other than profit maximization, such as prestige for having a high quality newspaper or social responsibility and public service.

Yet other studies have employed surveys as a research design to investigate the effects of ownership, mostly on the company's organizational goals or on the journalists' perception of the quality of their media organizations. Underwood and Stamm (1992) asked journalists at twelve U.S. West Coast newspapers – six family-owned and six chain newspapers – about their perception of their newspaper's organizational goals and changes in their newsrooms. All journalists reported that their newspapers had become more reader-oriented and market-driven, but more so at newspapers that were owned by a chain. Business-oriented changes have led to cutbacks in coverage, softening of content and reduction of staff, thus skewing the balance between the journalistic and business goals in favour of business. Journalists at chain papers also tended to indicate that their employers emphasized business

¹² The degree of inside control indicates how „public“ a publicly owned company is: the greater the percentage of voting stock held by insiders, the less “public” the company is and the more it resembles a traditional closely held company.

values – particularly profit goals – more often than their counterparts at family-owned newspapers. However, at both types of newspapers, traditional news values such as serving the needs of community or serving readers as citizens still had a greater priority than business goals. It thus appears that both types of newspapers try to cater to the marketplace and to preserve traditional journalistic values at the same time.

Coulson (1994) conducted a survey of 773 journalists at independent and group-owned newspapers and asked them to rate their paper's performance regarding local news coverage, editorial vigour and financial commitment to the editorial side. Journalists from both types of ownership generally had favourable opinion about their newspaper's local news coverage. Although journalists at independent newspapers tended to rate their paper's commitment to quality local coverage as excellent more often, there is no indication that group journalists perceived their newspapers to emphasize profit seeking at the expense of quality coverage and diversity of information.

With regard to the effects of ownership, the findings of these two surveys are relatively inconclusive, as there is no clear indication that journalists at group-owned newspapers perceive their organization's goals as more skewed toward the business end than journalists at independent or family-owned papers. Besides, journalist perception of their paper's quality can serve only as complement to, not surrogate of content quality, as this can only be adequately determined by content analyses.

In summary, studies in the USA on media ownership effects focus on differences between media belonging to large conglomerates and independent or family-owned media. Empirical results on effects of ownership on various performance aspects of media organizations are however far from conclusive. Publicly owned companies may be financially more successful (Blankenburg & Ozanich, 1993; Chang & Zeldes, 2002; Lacy et al., 1996), but there is hardly any clear empirical evidence that media contents provided by public groups are of lower quality than those provided by independent or family-owned outlets. A number of studies have found no empirical support for this hypothesis (Lacy, 1991; Lacy & Fico, 1990; Lacy & Riffe, 1994; Spavins et al., 2002); the findings of other studies might point to this direction (Napoli & Yan, 2007; Yan & Napoli, 2006), but are not as clear-cut as might be expected. However, there is some indication that group ownership might affect media companies'

organizational goals more toward business and profit ends (Coulson, 1994; Underwood & Stamm, 1992).

In Western Europe, the discussion of effects of media ownership does not focus on the distinction between group-owned and independent media, but on performance differences between public service broadcasters (PSB) and their commercial competitors.¹³ Because of fundamental changes in European broadcasting systems caused by deregulation, liberalization and privatization of broadcasting since the 1980s, European public broadcasters have been facing severe challenges. These challenges include a decline in audience share and advertising revenue, increasing prices for television programming and the need for extending their service while their revenues remain constant or even fall in real terms, loss of popular programme concepts and young talents to their commercial competitors, and a growing need for justifying their service and the licence fee (Blumler & Hoffmann-Riem, 1992; Dahlgren, 2000; Humphreys, 1996; McQuail, 1998; H. E. Meier, 2003; Papathanassopoulos, 2002; Rowland, 1991). Public service broadcasters have since been facing a dilemma: either they follow their commercial competitors “down market” in order to prevent a loss of audience or maintain high quality programmes that are however more likely to serve a smaller audience. The latter strategy might confront public broadcasters with difficulties to justify their service and, above all, the privilege of a special license fee. The so-called convergence hypothesis predicts that public service broadcasters choosing the first strategy will abandon their high quality programming profile and adapt their programming to that of their commercial competitors (Bruns & Marcinkowski, 1996; Hellman & Sauri, 1994; Pfetsch, 1996; Schatz, Immer, & Marcinkowski, 1989; Siune & Hultén, 1998). A consequence of this self-commercialization and sell-out of traditional PSB values is a mutual convergence in performance by public and commercial broadcasters.

Empirical support for the convergence hypothesis has been at best rather mixed. While there are some indications that public service broadcasters have become somewhat similar to their commercial competitors, especially in prime-time programming, in general, PSB channels still remain distinct from commercial channels and continue to show more factual,

¹³ This research area encompasses a vast body of literature; therefore, I cannot give a comprehensive account of the whole discussion but will only point out some general trends and findings in current research.

cultural and serious programming (Hellman & Sauri, 1994; Moe & Syvertsen, 2009; Pfetsch, 1996; Siune & Hultén, 1998). For example, longitudinal analyses of television programmes offered by German public service broadcasters and their commercial counterparts consistently reveal a strong difference between both groups. Public channels offer more informational programming including news and public affairs than commercial channels (Krüger & Zapf-Schramm, 2008; Maurer, Fretwurst, & Weiß, 2008). Newscasts for example made up ca. 10% of the airtime of the two main public channels ARD and ZDF in 2007 whereas the three most popular commercial channels RTL, Sat.1 and Pro7 devoted only 1% to 3% of their airtime to news (Krüger & Zapf-Schramm, 2008). This difference is also confirmed for other European countries: a study on prime-time information programming in twelve European countries found that public service channels devote almost twice as many information programmes as commercial broadcasters (Hajok & Schorb, 1998). A longitudinal comparison between public service and commercial channels in Belgium, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, Norway and Sweden corroborates this finding. Public service channels in these four countries all devote significantly more airtime to news and current affairs during prime time than commercial channels (Aalberg, Van Aelst, & Curran, forthcoming). Not only is there little indication that public and commercial channels have grown towards each other; in the Netherlands, the UK and Norway, the difference has even increased in 2007 as compared to 1987 and 1997.

Content analyses of news also revealed substantial differences between public and commercial channels. For example, in 2008, the German public broadcasters ARD and ZDF devoted substantial proportions of their main newscast to politics, economy and social issues whereas the commercial channels RTL and Sat.1 focused more on sports, accidents and disasters, and human interest topics (Krüger, 2009). These findings are supported by a study by Maurer who in addition also found that public channels cover more foreign countries in their news than commercial channels (2005).

Election coverage constitutes another popular research subject concerning differences between public service and commercial broadcasters (Strömbäck & Kaid, 2008). A recent content analysis of election coverage in the main evening newscasts aired by the main public

and commercial channels in Germany, Italy and Austria¹⁴ identifies important differences between both groups concerning topics and styles of election news (Plasser, Pallaver, & Lengauer, 2009). For the public service channels in all three countries, the authors found that the proportions of news stories on the elections dealing with political issues roughly equal those of stories on non-political issues. In contrast, the commercial channels in these countries rather focused on the latter, with more than two-thirds of election stories containing non-political news. Election coverage by public channels is rather policy- and issue-centred whereas commercial channels frame election news more in terms of game and horse race and display a rather personalized style of coverage.

A content analysis of election coverage in Sweden, however, arrived at different conclusions. Strömbäck compared election coverage in three Swedish television newscasts and four newspapers with regard to whether these news outlets framed politics as a game rather than as issues, whether they followed an interpretive rather than a descriptive journalistic style, and whether they allowed politicians to speak for themselves (2007). The author explicitly addressed effects of commercialization on news content. Independent variables serving as a proxy for commercialization are the structural factors ownership (private TV or public service broadcasting) and type of newspapers (tabloid vs. broadsheet). The results indicate that these structural factors cannot explain differences in the choice of frames, of journalistic styles and the use of sound bites and “ink-bites” of politicians: the differences between newscast of private and public service newscast and between tabloids and broadsheets, respectively, are either not significant or consistent across the news outlets. Thus, Strömbäck concluded that perceiving commercialization as the crucial force driving changes in news content might be too simplified and that “there need not be any contradiction between the news media simultaneously functioning as a marketplace of ideas and a marketplace of money” (p. 60).

All things considered, empirical studies indicate that public service channels in Western Europe have changed and adopted some scheduling and programming strategies from their commercial competitors. Nevertheless, most studies show that differences in content and

¹⁴ The USA was also part of the sample; however, as only the newscast of the commercial channel NBC was analyzed, no comparison could be made between U.S. public service and commercial channels.

style remain between commercial and public service channels with the latter continuing to offer more informational, cultural and serious programming and to provide higher quality news, especially in election coverage. In their comparative examination of the mass media's role in the political process in ten democracies, Gunther and Mughan concluded that in Western democracies with strong dominance of commercial broadcasting, there is less policy-relevant information on commercial television and political news tends to focus more on horse race and game frames (2000). Public broadcasters, in contrast, still cover public affairs extensively, provide an adequate volume of policy-relevant information to citizens and also adhere to the journalistic norms of balance and impartiality.

2.2.2 Effects of market conditions

How media organizations operate does not only depend on their ownership structure, but also on the market environment they operate in. Two important factors emerge from the literature about effects of market conditions on media performance: the degree of competition on the respective market and in the case of television markets also the relative strength of public service broadcasting.

Let us start with the second factor first because it is related to the discussion of public service broadcaster's performance in dual broadcasting systems as described above. In Western Europe, the introduction of commercial broadcasters brought about an increase in commercial orientation within the whole television system, affecting both public and commercial broadcasters. The main concern raised here is whether the increased commercialization enhanced or decreased the flow of political information (Hallin & Mancini, 2004). Although Hallin and Mancini stressed that the existing empirical evidence did not allow a conclusive answer, more recent studies obtained rather unambiguous results: in television systems that are more commercially oriented, the flow of news and current affairs is significantly lower than in systems in which public service mission is still upheld by strong public service broadcasters (Aalberg et al., forthcoming; Curran, Iyengar, Lund, & Salovaara-Moring, 2009).

The study by Aalberg and colleagues (forthcoming) traced the amount of political information – news and current affairs – in six countries over the time period from 1987 to 2007. The authors found that prime time supply of political information is lowest in the USA,

the most commercialized of these six countries in which public service broadcasting is weak and under-resourced and commercial broadcasters are subjected to minimal regulation. In the Democratist Corporatist countries Belgium, Netherlands, Norway and Sweden as well as in the United Kingdom – a country classified as belonging to the Liberal model by Hallin and Mancini (2004) – the amount of airtime devoted to political information has remained stable or even increased in the last twenty years. In these countries, public service broadcasting is relatively well financed and still plays an important role in the market. Moreover, commercial television is also subjected to regulation of public service so that in these countries, even commercial channels offer substantial prime time news and current affairs, although at lower levels than the respective public broadcasters. The authors concluded that the European countries in their sample have been strongly resistant to “subordinating the needs of democracy to profit-making” (p.14); their citizens are offered an ample amount of prime time news and current affairs by both PSB and commercial channels in contrast to U.S. citizens who have to make an active effort to seek political information.

This finding is partly confirmed by a study by Curran and colleagues (2009) who content analyzed news in television and newspapers in four countries. The authors found that in Finland and Denmark – countries they regarded as exemplifications of an “unreconstructed public service model in which the programming principles of public service still largely dominate” (p. 6) – television news offer more hard news and international news. In contrast, American commercial television and British television are more similar in their comparatively higher level of soft news and domestic focus.¹⁵ The different level of coverage of international news seems to exert a great influence on public knowledge of international affairs: results from a subsequent survey show that Scandinavian respondents are best informed about international hard news with the British closely behind and the Americans lagging in the rear. Although there are other societal factors determining how much people know about public life, the author suggest that there exists a “connection between patterns of news coverage and levels of public knowledge” (p. 14). This finding is also well supported by other studies that found that European citizens have a higher level of public affairs

¹⁵ The pattern is slightly different for newspaper content: the British and Danish press prioritizes soft and domestic news while the American and Finnish press provides more hard and international news. As newspapers are not affected by broadcasting regulation, this finding is not further discussed here.

knowledge than American citizens (Bonfadelli & Marr, 2008; Dimock & Popkin, 1997; Iyengar, Hahn, Bonfadelli, & Marr, 2009).

The other important influence market environment exerts on media organizations is the increasing concentration in media markets caused by the rise of vast media conglomerates. Although this development is deplored by many critics, especially from the political economy perspective (Bagdikian, 2004; Croteau & Hoynes, 2001; McChesney, 2000, 2004), the relationship between market competition and news content provided by media organizations operating in these markets is far from unambiguous. Even on a theoretical level, there exist two entirely contrary arguments. In the one view, increasing competition leads to lower news quality (McManus, 1994; Picard, 2008; Zaller, 1999). In competitive markets characterized by media abundance and audience fragmentation, media companies are faced with commercial pressures that reduce their willingness to invest in news and public affairs content, as the audience is supposedly not interested in this kind of news. Thus, news media engage in a “race to the bottom” and increasingly produce “soft news” such as crime, lifestyle, entertainment, since these are the cheapest types of news to draw and hold viewers. “Hard news”, such as public affairs programming dealing with local, national or international issues and problems, are more expensive to produce. Hence, some media organizations might make the choice to cede this kind of programming to other competitors, while focusing themselves on “soft news” (Hamilton, 2004).

The other line of argument suggests exactly the opposite outcome: According to the financial commitment approach – as first reported by Litman and Bridges (1986) and later put forward by Lacy (1992) – as intensity of competition increases, news providers react by allotting more financial resources to news content. The increased financial commitment supposedly leads to an increase in news quality, which in turn enhances the audience's utility from the content. If the audience derives more utility from the news product, the news organization's performance in the market improves by an increase in circulation and ratings so that it will have more financial resources to invest in the newsroom, thus creating a “virtuous circle”.

Early empirical studies (up to the 1990s) on the relationship between market conditions and news content are contradictory. Most studies could not demonstrate any relationship while some studies could detect a positive relationship between market competition and news

content (Heinrich, 2001a). A review by Lacy and Martin (2004) that considered more recent studies concluded that intense new paper competition increases expenditures in the newsroom and thus leads to improvement in content quality. However, the authors also admitted that there are a number of studies that do not support the financial commitment theory but dismissed these contradictory results due to limited sample size or their lack of taking competition variables into account. Zaller, on the other hand, found market competition to be inversely related to news quality (1999).

More recent studies seem to provide partial support to the hypothesis that market competition will ultimately lead to an increase in news quality. Several studies conducted by Napoli and Yan (Napoli, 2001; Napoli & Yan, 2007; Yan & Napoli, 2006) show limited empirical support for the hypothesis that greater competition in media markets increases the production of news and public affairs programming. Content analyses of programme output of 289 U.S. local television stations show that commercial TV stations in media markets with a larger number of television stations are more likely to offer any kind of local public affairs programming and more local news programming than stations in markets with few competitors. However, the relationship is rather weak. Another content analysis of 154 TV stations in 50 TV markets conducted by Belt and Just (2008) also found no support for the “race to the bottom” hypothesis of market competition. Using a quality index that comprises five quality variables,¹⁶ the authors found that TV stations in competitive markets are not more likely to air lower quality stories. On the contrary, if only lead stories are considered, TV stations in more competitive markets tend to air stories of higher quality, as measured via this index.

In sum, both theory and empirical research on the relationship between market competition and news quality are rather contradictory. Depending on how market competition and news quality are defined and measured and what other potentially intervening variables are included in the analysis, studies have come to quite contradictory conclusions. Although recent content analyses found limited support for a positive relationship, analyses of recent developments in media markets (Picard, 2008) and surveys of journalists (Pew Research

¹⁶ These five variables are significance in terms of “hard news”, journalistic enterprise, balance, authoritativeness and relevance to the community.

Center for the People and the Press & Project for Excellence in Journalism, 2008; Preston, 2009; Weaver et al., 2007) imply that increasing competition on media markets does have significant implications for journalistic practice, forcing news workers to adjust to audience demands by shifting toward lighter news topics.

One explanation for this seeming contradiction could be that the relationship between market competition and news quality is not linear, but that there is a threshold under which market competition can enhance news quality, as suggested by the financial commitment theory. Above this threshold, however, markets become hypercompetitive so that media organizations' profits will drop below critical levels, leading to lower financial commitment to the newsroom and lower news quality (Hollifield, 2006). This hypothesis is supported by a study of the Dutch television market which suggests that while moderate competition improves diversity of TV programmes, ruinous competition produces excessive sameness (van der Wurff & van Cuilenburg, 2001). Another limitation of the studies just cited is that except for the survey conducted by Preston and his colleagues and the study by van der Wurff and van Cuilenburg, all other studies concentrate on local news markets in the USA. Whether the patterns found can be validated on a national level or even in international comparisons remains unclear.

2.2.3 Effects of cost minimization

Closely related to the relationship between market competition and news performance is the discussion of the consequences of budget-allocation and the pursuit of cost effectiveness in the newsroom. If Picard's argument holds true, then media companies operating under turbulent market conditions will prefer to pursue tangible benefits and enhance their financial performance over intangible benefits such as prestige and influence (Picard, 2008). From a simple business operations perspective, cost minimization is a straightforward way to boost profits. According to critics, however, the strategy of producing news at lowest possible costs has had serious consequences for journalistic quality and diversity of news content (Bennett, 2005; Croteau & Hoynes, 2001; Heinrich, 2001b; McManus, 1994; W. A. Meier & Jarren, 2001; Picard, 2004; Siegert, 2003; Siegert et al., 2005). As the survey of American journalists conducted by Weaver and colleagues (2007) has shown, shortage of resources in the newsroom constitutes a major restraint on professional autonomy felt by

journalists. News workers at organizations seeking to maximize profit have less time and resources to devote to active news discovery; instead, they have to rely heavily on outside sources such as press conferences and press materials from public relations offices of corporations and government agencies, other newspapers, television stations and wire services. This reliance then results in a “growing standardization of information... [as] more information is produced in generic form, wholesaled to many outlets, and later dressed up or down, as the format of a particular channel and the demographics of its audience dictate” (Bennett, 2005, p. 92). Furthermore, as media products are experience and credence goods, there is little incentive for media organizations to provide high quality and costly media contents such as investigative reports. In addition, due to very high first-copy costs, innovative media production faces high financial risks in a market environment characterized by adverse selection. Thus, media organizations will tend to favour price competition over quality competition and employ risk-averting strategies of imitation and multiple use of content, so that the diversity of media outlets does not translate into diversity and depth of news content but into “more of the same”.

To my knowledge, there is no study that examined the relationship of newsroom resources and news quality in an empirical, systematic manner. There is some indication that top quality newspapers tend to invest more newsroom resources than other papers. Edmonds (2004) compared five papers ranked in the *Columbia Journalism Review's* 1999 survey of the industry's best with five weak papers – as determined by an informal group of experts in the newspaper industry – with similar circulation size and found that the quality newspapers have a higher than average staff ratio than the weak papers. However, the converse of the quality-staffing assumption does not hold, as a list of newspapers with the highest staffing ratios does not contain any paper recognized for an outstanding news-editorial report. However, due to the lack of systematic measurement of quality and the small sample size, this finding can only be regarded as anecdotal evidence.

A number of studies avoided the issue of measuring news quality altogether and considered newspaper circulation as a surrogate for quality, arguing that a quality newspaper is one that provides great utility to readers and hence reaches high circulation (Lacy & Fico, 1991). The argument corresponds with the financial commitment approach as put forward by Lacy (1992): increased newsroom investment will enhance a newspaper's quality in terms of its

ability to serve the wants and needs of readers and thus increase the probability of readers purchasing the newspaper. The study conducted by Lacy and Fico (1991) found a positive relationship between a newspaper's content quality¹⁷ and its circulation. However, this study used quite outdated data from 1984 and 1985. More recent studies by Stephen Lacy and his colleagues did not measure content quality, but all found that newspapers that invested more in their newsrooms outperformed other papers in business success in terms of circulation, penetration, revenues per copy from circulation or advertising (Chen, Thorson, & Lacy, 2005; Cho, Thorson, & Lacy, 2004; Cyr, Lacy, & Guzman-Ortega, 2005). This link between investment in newsroom and circulation is also found in other studies (Blankenburg & Friend, 1994; Rosenstiel & Mitchell, 2004). The relationship between newsroom investment, content quality and circulation has also been confirmed in a study by Lacy and Martin (1998). The authors selected Thomson newspapers as a newspaper group with low newsroom investment¹⁸ and found that from 1980 to 1990, Thomson newspapers averaged 2,292 fewer subscriptions than non-Thomson dailies similar in circulation and market size.

The difficulties in conducting systematic research on the relationship between newsroom investment and cost minimization on the one hand and news performance on the other hand lie primarily in problems of data access. Most media organizations are not willing to share sensitive information such as their staff size and investments in the newsroom. The studies mentioned in the previous paragraph mostly used indirect information published in databases such as the one by Inland Press Association in the USA. These data are, however, anonymous and do not allow to establish a direct link between newsroom resources and content quality.¹⁹

¹⁷ Content quality is determined by a quality index consisting of size of news hole (as compared to advertising), length of stories, and ratio of news interpretation to spot news.

¹⁸ as stated by the Thomson CEO in a 1993 speech

¹⁹ Unfortunately, this problem of data access cannot be resolved in this study, either. For the twenty-two TV channels in this study's sample (see Chapter 4.1), there are data on staff size for only twelve channels so that it is not possible to examine the assumed relationship between newsroom resources and news performance.

2.2.4 Effects of market orientation

As mentioned above, the pressure exerted by the advertising industry on the media is seen by critics as a serious threat to journalistic integrity and the media's public remit. Direct or indirect attempts by advertisers or the parent company to inhibit media content that might hurt advertisers' interest have been referred to above. Another venue of undue advertiser influence comes in more general form, affecting what kind of media content will be provided (McManus, 1995; Napoli, 2006; Saxer, 1998; Siegert, 2003; Siegert et al., 2005; Underwood, 2001). Media that are vehicles for advertising clients seeking to reach a large audience will tend to provide mass attractive programming and shun content that might run risk of being unpopular with the audience. Naturally, mass attractive content is not necessarily low quality content, but critics fear that this kind of programming will tend to be lowest-common-denominator content in order to cater for the audience members with comparatively low educational levels. Media that serve advertisers seeking specific segments of the audience, on the other hand, might be compelled to neglect other segments of the audience that advertisers consider less valuable ("wastage"). Most often, these segments are those with only limited purchasing power, such as minority audience segments or elderly people. Hence, content decisions will be made not to serve the audience, but to cater for advertisers' needs and interests.

Another consequence of the mass media's orientation toward advertisers is the increasingly blurry line between advertising and editorial content (Croteau & Hoynes, 2001; Picard, 2004; Siegert et al., 2005). Media content has to provide a consumer friendly, uncritical environment for advertising messages. In more critical instances, advertising might be integrated into editorial content (such as through product placement on television and in movies) to overcome the audience's resistance to ubiquitous commercial ads. One prominent example of how the "wall of church and state" in journalism – meaning the separation between the business side of media and editorial content – has been torn down in the pursuit of profits concerns the "Staples Center affair" at the Los Angeles Times in 1999 (Bennett, 2005; Croteau & Hoynes, 2001; Overholser, 2004). The Times secretly cooperated with the Staples Center, a new sports and entertainment venue in Los Angeles, to share advertising profits from stories in its Sunday magazine in which almost all stories cover the

Staples Center. This “hidden financial partnership” between the paper and the subjects of its coverage led to an “open revolt” in the Times’ newsroom (Overholser, 2004).

Apart from anecdotal evidence about advertisers’ pressure on news workers to alter reports to represent their products or to drop critical stories altogether (Bagdikian, 2004; Bennett, 2005; Croteau & Hoynes, 2001), empirical studies that systematically investigated the willingness of editors or advertising directors to accommodate advertisers’ wishes to influence news content are rather rare. Two surveys of U.S. journalists cited above (Pew Research Center for the People and the Press & Project for Excellence in Journalism, 2008; Weaver et al., 2007) indicate that pressure from advertisers to shape news content or to induce self-censorship by journalists to avoid stories that might hurt their advertisers’ interest constitutes one severe perceived constraint on professional autonomy of journalists.

A study conducted by Soley and Craig (1992) shows that the vast majority of the surveyed newspaper editors have experienced advertisers’ attempts to influence news and feature stories in their papers and that advertisers have exerted economic pressure in form of threats to withdraw advertising in case of unfavourable stories. The more disquieting result is that over a third of the respondents said that advertisers had succeeded in influencing news content and more than half said there has been pressure from within their own paper to write or tailor news stories to please advertisers. The willingness to acquiesce to advertiser pressure is more pronounced at newspaper with small circulation which might be explained by the fact that smaller newspapers often receive ad revenues from a few large advertisers whom they cannot afford to offend.

These findings are confirmed by a study of An and Bergen (2007) who surveyed advertising sales executives. The researchers wanted to examine how ad directors – who play an interface role between the editorial department and advertisers – would deal with advertiser demands to influence news content. When presented with four scenarios in which editorial integrity might be compromised by advertiser pressure, the surveyed ad directors did not, as might have been expected, rate these scenarios as completely unacceptable, but showed a weak willingness to appease their advertisers by yielding for example to a request for a special section story or a news photo showing an advertiser’s logo. Similar to Soley and Craig’s findings, An and Bergen’s study also found that ad directors at small newspapers are more willing to acquiesce to advertiser pressure than ad directors at

papers with large circulation, particularly at small chain newspapers in comparison with large independent newspapers.

A survey of network correspondents by Price (2003) did not confirm these findings. When asked whether they had felt compelled to report or not to report a story due to pressure by the network owners or advertisers, four out of five surveyed correspondents said they never perceived this kind of pressure, and only 6% felt rarely pressured by advertisers. The contradictory findings might be due to the fact that newspapers, and particularly small ones, are more dependent on a few, local advertisers whose advertising money is essential to their business, whereas television networks deal with more advertisers and on a national basis. The anecdotes of advertiser pressure reported above (Bagdikian, 2004; Bennett, 2005; Croteau & Hoynes, 2001) might not be a typical experience for television correspondents on a day-to-day basis.

Mass media sell a “dual product”, namely media content to an audience, and the audience’s attention to advertisers. Hence, the advertising market is not the only market the media operate in, albeit it is the more important market for most media. The audience market, on the other hand, also has a significant influence on content decisions, leading to what critics lament as “market-driven journalism” (Beam, 2003; Bennett, 2005; Croteau & Hoynes, 2001; Hamilton, 2004; Picard, 2004, 2005; Siegert et al., 2005). The assumption is that readers and viewers are not as interested in “hard news” and public affairs information as in “private sphere” information, i.e. lifestyle, healthcare, entertainment, sports and “news you can use”. Hence, market-oriented media will tend to provide more of this kind of content than information about public life. Readers’ interests in specific issues are identified through marketing research and focus groups and are met through the provision of special sections in newspapers, for example (Attaway-Fink, 2004). Moreover, critics suggest that market-driven media give a false priority to the publication’s appearances such as layout and graphics, so that readers and viewers are provided with devices allowing easy processing of information instead of substantive public affairs information. In order to attract and retain the audience’s attention, news and entertainment programs tilt towards trivialization and sensationalism, focusing on sex, violence and spectacle. News has increasingly been blended with entertainment, resulting in what has been termed “news lite” or “infotainment”. U.S. local news, especially, with its focus on crime, accidents, fires, sports, and weather, and

almost without “hard news”, provides excellent illustrations of this development (Bennett, 2005; Croteau & Hoynes, 2001). Especially in election coverage, the low entertainment value of hard news is raised by focusing on the horse race between candidates at the expense of issues and policy, so that this kind of “game frame” has come to dominate the coverage of political campaigns (Farnsworth & Lichter, 2007; Patterson, 1994). Thus, the mass media, in the words of Croteau and Hoynes, address “people as consumers and spectators, not as active citizens [...] News does little to help teach citizens about how government works or why they should care” (p. 206). “This is why market oriented media have a tendency to produce economic benefits while simultaneously creating (or at least helping to sustain) democratic deficits” (p. 24).

Potential effects of market-orientation on newspaper companies’ organizational goals, content priorities and performance have been investigated by Randal A. Beam in several surveys and content analyses (1995, 1998, 2001, 2002, 2003). Beam first determined the degree of market-orientation along three dimensions: 1) generation of market intelligence, i.e. readers’ interests, wants and needs; 2) dissemination of this information throughout the company, e.g. through meetings between editors and representatives of other departments; and 3) responsiveness to this intelligence by designing content or appearance changes to cater for readers’ wants and needs. His findings suggest that the strength of market-orientation is best predicted by ownership by a large newspaper group. However, there is no empirical support for the hypothesis that market-driven journalism is inconsistent with quality journalism. On the contrary, a high degree of market-orientation is also associated with emphasis on producing news content of excellent quality and keeping employee morale high, which in turn is expected to result in high quality news products. Hence, contrary to what critics believe, strongly market-oriented newspapers are not necessarily less committed to traditional content, including public-affairs content, and they value the importance of achieving a reputation for public-service journalism and for excellent news content even more than less market-oriented newspapers (1998, 2002). It is true that market-oriented newspapers emphasize profit goals and give priority to special interest content and visual content, but apparently not at the expense of traditional public-affairs content. When asked about their employer’s content priorities, editors at stronger market-oriented newspapers rated their employer’s commitment to this kind of content even higher

than editors at weakly market-oriented papers. Beam concluded that “[b]eing a market-driven newsroom may be an organizational strategy with different causes. Some news organizations may embrace market-driven journalism in the pursuit of higher profits, while others may do so in the pursuit of better journalism.” (2002, p. 60).

This conclusion is supported by a content analysis in which Beam examined whether there is a difference in content quality between strongly and weakly market-oriented newspapers (2003). The analysis indeed found that newspapers with a strong market-orientation carried fewer stories about government and public affairs, more stories about private life, sports, and entertainment, and were more visually oriented than newspapers with a weak market-orientation. However, as 40% of all items on the main display pages and 60% of all items on Page 1 of these papers were devoted to stories on public affairs, Beam argued that it is not permissible to maintain that market-driven newspapers neglect public affairs content and to equate market-driven journalism with cheap journalism.

A survey among newspaper editors at the level of top newsroom managers and among rank-and-file journalists also suggests that market-driven journalism does not necessarily mean a threat to traditional journalism values (Gade, 2002, 2004). Although the majority of the respondents criticized that the wall between news and business interests had been weakened by cross-departmental teams and a newsroom culture that emphasized greater marketing intelligence, there is also a significant proportion of newsroom editors who believed that increased marketing intelligence was both good business and good journalism. For these journalists, newspapers must get closer to readers and their interests, but at the same time retain journalistic independence and their connection to public credibility.

In sum, similar to the discussion of the effects of public ownership and market conditions, empirical evidence shows that the assumed consequences of market-orientation on news content are not as clear-cut as theory stated. Anecdotal evidence and a few surveys show that there is indeed pressure asserted by advertising clients in order to influence news content to their favour (An & Bergen, 2007; Pew Research Center for the People and the Press & Project for Excellence in Journalism, 2008; Soley & Craig, 1992; Weaver et al., 2007). On the other hand, there are also empirical studies indicating that these incidents might not be a typical experience for journalists on a day-to-day basis (Price, 2003). Content analyses and surveys on potential consequences of orientation toward audience demands suggest

that news media with a strong market-orientation do not necessarily neglect “hard news” and place less emphasis on producing news content of excellent quality (Beam, 2002, 2003). Hence, good journalism and good business are not a priori mutually exclusive.

2.3 Summary of the literature review

The literature review shows that central aspects of the discussion of commercialization are related to changes in media markets caused by deregulation and privatization, at least in Western countries. These changes involve an increase in concentration of media ownership, the rise of large media conglomerates and growing market competition. Unstable, competitive market conditions (in contrast to moderate competition) cause media organizations to minimize operational costs, especially in the newsroom, and to orientate themselves toward demands on both advertising and audience markets. The general assumption is that all these tendencies will lead to a lower news performance, as media organizations disinvest in the newsroom and neglect public interest contents such as hard news and public affairs. In order to maximize audience ratings and to comply with advertisers’ demands, news providers engage in a “race to the bottom” by focusing on lowest-common-denominator content. Thus, news increasingly includes information on lifestyle, healthcare, entertainment, sports and “news you can use” and is presented in a sensationalist way.

This bleak picture seems to have become a conventional wisdom, particularly in purely theoretical papers. However, systematic empirical studies of effects of commercialization processes on media organizations’ performance often provide inconclusive results. The reasons for this probably lie primarily in the nature of empirical social scientific inquiry. Depending on how the independent variables (ownership structure, the degree of inside control, market conditions, market-orientation, etc.), intervening variables (size of the media organization, market size, etc.), and dependent variables (quality of news content, newsroom size, financial commitment to the newsroom, perceived organizational goals, etc.) are defined and measured, studies often come to quite different and sometimes contradictory results. As commercialization is a multi-dimensional and multi-faceted process, these conflicting results may be anticipated. However, in the end, the aspect of greatest interest is news performance, whereas measures such as newsroom investment, newsroom

size, organizational goals or journalists' perception of their organization's performance are only a necessary condition of or a proxy for news quality. In my view, media output should be the main subject of study to examine if one wants to measure media performance in light of the public functions of the media.²⁰

Another and more severe limitation of the existing literature is that most studies were conducted in the U.S. context. This might be due to the fact that there are numerous data on structural factors such as ownership information, number of competitors and size of local media markets available to U.S. researchers. Therefore, the existing literature provides numerous insights into effects of commercialization on news content on local newspaper and television markets in the USA, but whether these findings are also valid in other contexts, i.e. on the national market or in other countries, remains unclear. In order to achieve research results with higher generalizability, it is necessary to investigate potential effects of commercialization on news content in an international comparative study. Comparative research is "an essential antidote to naïve universalism" and "unwitting parochialism" (Blumler & Gurevitch, 1995, pp. 75-76), i.e. it helps avoid the presumption that findings from one context are applicable everywhere and see communication patterns in one's own system in a fresh light when this is contrasted to characteristic features and practices in other systems (Blumler, MacLeod, & Rosengren, 1992). In fact, the few existing systematic international comparative studies all indicate substantial differences between European broadcasting systems with a strong PSB presence and the commercially oriented American model. Moreover, the only possibility to investigate potential effects of systemic variables on a national level – e.g. effects of how the broadcasting system is organized on media performance – is to consider more than one media system, as these variables are constant within one national context.

2.4 Multi-level models of influences on media content

What is now needed is a consistent conceptual framework to classify the aforementioned economic influences shaping news content. Such a framework has to be able to describe the

²⁰ Of course, it is perfectly legitimate to examine the economic performance of media organisations, but this strand of research does not necessarily have to take the public functions of mass media into consideration.

multiple levels of influence that have an impact on the operation of the media and to sort out economic and non-economic influences on these levels. In the last two decades, there have been a number of attempts to identify and classify these influences in a systematic framework.

One such framework has been developed by Shoemaker and Reese in their widely cited book “Mediating the message: Theories of influences on mass media content” (1996). The authors established the “hierarchy-of-influences” model, a theoretical framework to analyze media content (also cf. Reese, 2001, 2007; Shoemaker & Vos, 2009). This framework helps classify the multiple forces and their complex relationships that shape media content by identifying five levels of analysis on which these influences can be located. On the individual level of news workers, the common theoretical assumption is that attitudes, training, and background of individual journalists hold the power to shape media content. On the level of media routines, the authors consider rules, norms and procedures that are embedded in media work and create a structure within which journalistic work is both enabled and constrained. On the next higher level of media organizations, it is the organization’s goals and policies and the structures established to enforce these policies that supposedly play an important role in shaping media content. The extra-media level perspective holds that media operate in structured relationships with other institutions, including government, advertisers, public relations, influential news sources, interest groups, and other media organizations and that these relationships also influence media content. On the ideological level, media content is considered as a function of ideological positions that help maintain the status quo and support the interests of those in power in society. These five levels are conceptualized as five concentric circles, indicating that each successive level subsumes the one(s) prior.

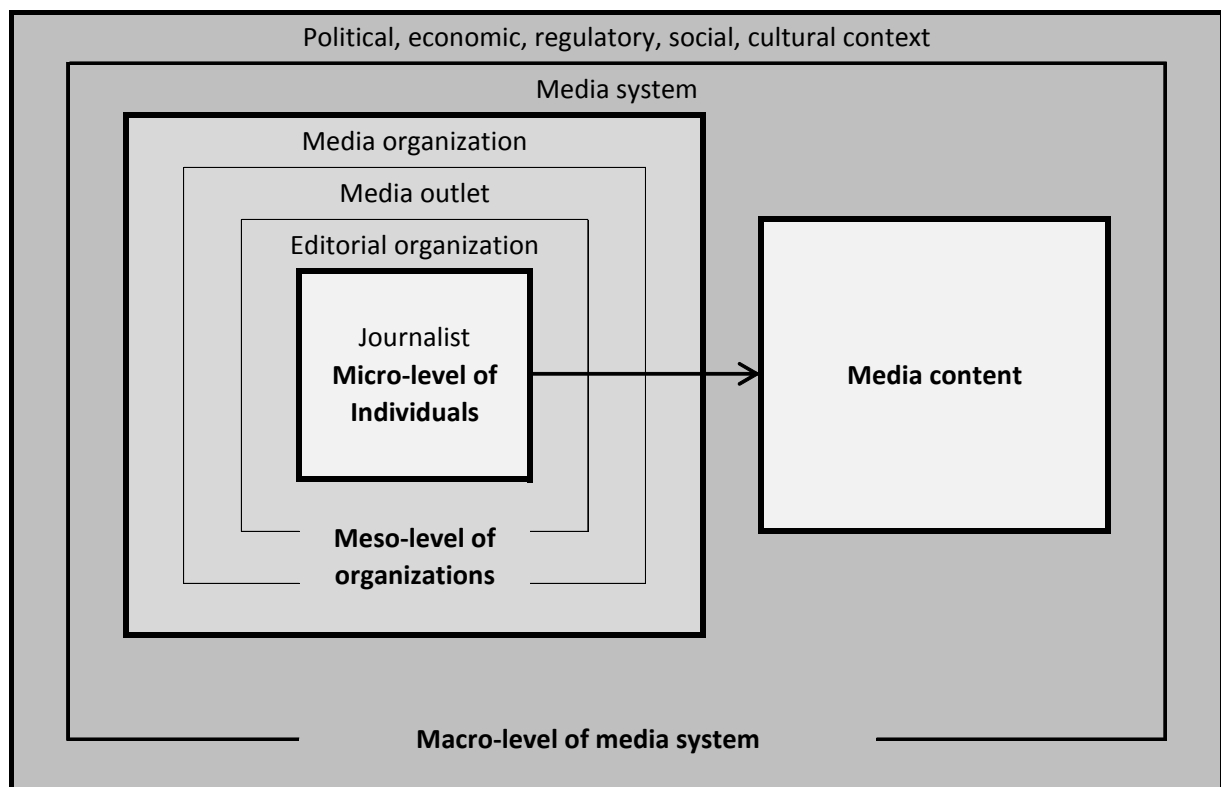
Other multi-level models to systematize influences on news content have been suggested by Donsbach (1987, 2008), Weischenberg (Scholl & Weischenberg, 1998; Weischenberg, 1998) and Esser (1998). Donsbach emphasized the importance of psychological determinants and suggested that journalistic work can be best explained by variables on the individual level such as subjective beliefs and attitudes. In contrast, Reese proposed to investigate media production from the perspective of “media sociology” and to “tackle the structural context of journalism, moving beyond the more narrow attempt to psychologize the media through

the attitudes and values of individual practitioners” (2001, p. 174). Weischenberg used systems theory to explain the production of media content and compared influences on the journalistic system with different layers of onion skin, with each layer standing for a set of influences shaping media operations. Esser adopted Weischenberg’s onion metaphor, but referred in his model of influences on journalism not only to systems theory, but also considered the influences of institutional and actor-oriented factors.

Although these frameworks all differ somewhat with regard to their theoretical orientation, the number and labelling of the levels of analysis and the relevance accorded to influences on each level of the hierarchy, they all refer to the same basic idea: influences shaping media content can be located on different levels of analysis and these levels form a hierarchy with the higher level subsuming the lower ones.²¹ Figure 1 presents a simplified schema of a multi-level model which refers to the sociological basic distinction of micro, meso and macro level (Bonfadelli & Hanitzsch, 2007). On the micro level of individuals, personal beliefs, attitudes, professional background and role perceptions of journalists undoubtedly influence media content that the respective journalist produces. On the meso level of media organizations, organizational goals, policies, resources and strategies create structures which both enable and constraint the daily work of all journalists working in the same media organization. Finally, all media organizations in one country are subjected to the same influences exerted by forces on the macro level of media system and the broader political, economical, societal and cultural context. Media system factors are for example economic conditions of the media market, the degree of political parallelism, the degree and nature of state intervention in the media or the degree of professionalization of journalism. How these characteristics of the media system are shaped is in turn dependent on the broader context, such as the value of press freedom or the political culture in the respective country.

²¹ This does not imply that factors on different levels operate independently from each other. Factors on all levels are in continuous interplay, with factors on lower levels also exerting influence on factors on higher levels.

Figure 1: A multi-level model of influences on media content



Source: Bonfadelli & Hanitzsch (2007)

This hierarchy-of-influences model does not present a complete theoretical explanation for news production, but it helps sort out key concepts and relevant factors that researchers may address. It cannot capture all complex interrelationships that are involved in the operations of media and shape media content as the outcome of these operations. Models, by definition, are meant to simplify and help systematize the most influential factors and their complex interrelationships. Naturally, it is not possible to take all potential influences into consideration, and the task for the investigator is to focus on those factors that are of greatest interest and relevance to the research question at hand. In the field of international and comparative studies, the hierarchy-of-influences model provides crucial advantages as a heuristic for analysis: it provides a suitable framework to systematize all relevant factors that interact with and influence the research topics under investigation and to identify factors in different media systems that are functionally equivalent and thus operationalizable (Esser, 2004).

This multi-level model enables to combine the aspects discussed in the literature review and to bring together the different theoretical approaches to commercialization. Systemic

changes in media systems as discussed by (mostly European) communication researchers can be linked to developments in a broader political, economic, regulatory, social, and cultural context in the model. These changes in the media system in turn brought about structural changes in the media industry, i.e. growth of media corporations to large international conglomerates – the main concern in the works of political economists. A concentration of media ownership as well as changes in cost and revenue structure of media organizations again result in these organizations' changing priorities and operational strategies as observed by media economists.

3 Research design

In this study, I intend to investigate whether economic factors on the levels of media organizations and media systems influence the production of television news content. The present study leaves out the individual level of journalists for various reasons. As studies on gatekeeping have shown (Shoemaker & Vos, 2009), micro-approaches with focus on individuals do not take into account the many constraints faced by individual journalists including editorial guidelines, existence of resources, financial restraints. Hence, journalistic output is not the product of individuals but the outcome of a complex process within the setting of a media organization. Moreover, journalists of a particular leaning often self-select into media organizations that reflect their own preferences in political leaning or organizational culture (Reese, 2008). My focus is therefore to examine how factors such as ownership structure, market-orientation, and revenue structures of media organizations influence journalistic output. Media organizations, in turn, operate within the larger context of their national media systems. Thus, aspects on the macro level such as competition within the media market or concentration of ownership resulting from deregulatory activities supposedly play an important role on shaping the operations of media enterprises.

The present study focuses on economic influences shaping the production of television news. For several reasons, news on radio as well as news in print and online media is not considered. First, television markets in Western Europe have witnessed fundamental changes in the last decades due to the introduction of commercial broadcasting and thus provide an excellent object of study for an examination of consequences of commercialization. Second, unlike newspapers or magazines, news coverage on television has only limited airtime, so that TV news editors are forced to a stronger news selection than their counterparts at print media. Therefore, this selection process might reveal economic influences on news decisions more clearly than in other media. Third, studies discussed in the literature review mostly concentrate on newspapers or local TV news (in the USA); an international and comparative study is needed to test whether the findings are also valid with regard to economic influences on national TV news.

Finally, TV news provides an excellent object of study for a comparative analysis: news programmes are an important part of prime time television programme (Hajok & Schorb,

2009) and form an integral part of the daily media diet of large proportions of the population in most countries around the world (Conway, 2008). Despite fierce competition from the Internet, TV news still remains the most often used source of information in many countries (Unz, 2008). In the USA, both a survey by the Pew Research Center for People and the Press and a Gallup poll found that in 2008, more than half of the respondents use TV news as everyday sources of news (Morales, 2008; Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, 2008). In Germany, 90% of respondents said in a survey that they enjoyed watching TV news and TV ratings show that more than half of German adults use TV news as a daily source of information (Zubayr & Geese, 2009). Especially during election campaigns, television is the dominant channel for communication between government, candidates and the electorate (Kaid & Strömbäck, 2008), thus exerting a strong influence on processes of political communication and formation of political orientation and opinions. For these reasons, TV news has been investigated in several international comparative studies. However, comparing TV news in different countries poses many difficulties such as access to the audiovisual material, finding collaborators in the countries to be studied and coders proficient in the respective language. Therefore, comparative analyses of TV news are still restricted to a few studies (e.g. Cohen, Adoni, Bantz, & Robinson, 1990; Esser, 2008; Heinderyckx, 1993; Kamps, 1998, 1999; Köster & Wolling, 2006; Plasser et al., 2009; Rössler, 2004; Shoemaker & Cohen, 2006; Wu, 2000, 2003).

The basic design of this study is as follows: I aim at identifying empirically workable indicators of commercialization and collecting data on these indicators for TV channels in different countries so that it is possible to compare news performance by TV channels operating in environments with different degrees of commercialization. This design naturally also involves the collection of data on news performance via content analysis. The ultimate aim is to answer the primary research question of whether TV channels facing strong economic pressures fare worse with regard to news performance than TV channels operating in a less commercialized environment. In the following, I will discuss which economic influences will be included in this study and which dimensions of news performance will be examined in the content analysis. Finally, I will discuss which countries will be included in the country sample.

3.1 Economic influences

The literature review has revealed central aspects of commercialization and their consequences on news media; these central aspects include media ownership, market conditions, cost minimization and market-orientation. In the context of this study, it is not possible to take all relevant aspects into consideration. Therefore, I will concentrate on a selected number of economic influences deemed to be of central importance and for which data are accessible.²²

On the macro level of media systems, the degree of competition on the market is highly relevant for this study. In the last decades, technological developments such as cable television, satellite technology and the Internet have increased pressure on traditional news outlets such as newspapers and (network) television to compete for readers and viewers. Although low to moderate market competition might spur media organizations to a higher financial commitment to the newsroom (Lacy, 1992), a hypercompetitive market environment might have the opposite effect (Hollifield, 2006). Faced with decreasing readership or viewership and lower profits, media organizations might disinvest in news categories that supposedly do not attract the audience, such as hard news and public affairs, and focus more on types of news content that are able to attract the attention of large audiences but cheap to produce. This phenomenon is supposedly more pronounced in media systems in which advertising constitutes a major source of revenue for most media companies, as these companies are compelled to attract either large audiences or specific target audiences highly valued by advertisers (Hamilton, 2004). As this study is only concerned with TV news, I will investigate whether the extent of dependency on advertising in national television systems affects TV channels' news performance.

Another feature of media systems I deem important is the relative position of public service broadcasting. Public service broadcasters operate according to the logic of serving the public interest; their newscasts are expected to put more emphasis on addressing social needs and follow the traditional professional norms of "good journalism" more closely. In media systems with a strong PSB tradition, i.e. in which public broadcasters have a strong

²² As mentioned above, it is not possible to include the aspect of cost minimization in this study because data on newsroom resources are not accessible for many TV channels in the sample.

acceptance in society and thus a strong position in the market, one might expect that both PSB and competing commercial broadcasters will pay more attention to public interest content: PSB stations with a strong position will be willing and able to cover hard news and public affairs, as they are not too much concerned with attracting a large audience at all costs. Competing commercial broadcasters in these media systems have two strategic options: either to adapt to PSB news standards or to differentiate their newscasts from their public service competitors. If the news audience of PSB is large enough, there will be at least one or more commercial broadcasters who will try to compete for this audience by adopting the first strategy and also focusing on hard news and public affairs.

On the meso level of TV channels, an obvious factor of interest is ownership structure of the respective channel. The most important difference is between public service broadcasters and commercial broadcasters. Ideally, one should also differentiate between family-owned or independent TV channels and commercial channels belonging to vast media conglomerates. At least in the USA, critics have asserted that group-owned media outlets are more pressured to produce profits even at the expense of good journalism, whereas family-owned or independent media are supposedly more willing or able to sacrifice profits for the sake of the public good by devoting more resources to cover public interest content. Unfortunately, it is not possible to include family-owned or independent TV channels in this study which uses data from an international project on TV news (cf. Chapter 3.3). In this project's sample, all commercial broadcasters are group-owned so that there is no variance regarding the ownership structure.²³ As the question of access to news content data is of decisive importance, it is unfortunately not possible to take this ownership aspect into consideration. Therefore, only a difference between public service channels and group-owned commercial channels can be made. However, it is possible to take another feature of interest into account, namely whether shares of the group or conglomerate to which the commercial broadcasters in the sample belong are publicly traded on the stock market. Publicly traded media are supposedly under higher pressure to yield profits in order to satisfy analysts and investors than media whose shares are not publicly traded. This need to perform well for the sake of the stock market is expected to result in short-term strategies

²³ The only exception is the Israeli commercial channel Arutz2.

such as cutting costs in the newsroom, thus directly affecting the TV channel's news performance.

With respect to public service broadcasters in various countries, it is important to take their revenue structure into account.²⁴ PSB channels that derive the majority of their revenues from license fees or subsidies are mostly shielded from market forces. In contrast, PSB channels that depend to a great part on advertising as a source of income are compelled to attract a large audience in order to compete with commercial broadcasters for advertising revenues. Under the assumption that the majority of the audience or of the "premium audience" – young people with high buying power – is not as interested in news about politics and public affairs as in news about sports, life style, health care etc., PSB channels depending on advertising are expected to focus more on this type of "soft news" and present their newscasts in a more sensationalist manner in order to attract viewers.

One important aspect of commercialization discussed in the literature review refers to the news media's orientation towards advertising clients and the audience market. In order to ascertain whether their news content corresponds with viewers' preferences, TV stations might carry out market research on news audience. This kind of market-driven journalism has been criticized as "pandering towards the audience" but research has shown that doing market research is not necessarily incompatible with a commitment to traditional hard news and public-affairs content (Beam, 2003). Therefore, I will investigate whether there is a difference in news performance between TV channels with high market research activity and those which engage less in market research. Regrettably, the orientation toward advertising clients cannot be examined in the present study. Including this aspect into the investigation would require substantial efforts to collect suitable data via document analyses and interviews with journalists working for TV channels in different countries. This task would require a study in its own right and is insurmountable in the context of the present study.

²⁴ Free-to-air commercial broadcasters are financed for the most part by advertising. Additional sources of revenues consist of program sales and in some countries, even small amounts of subsidies. However, as the main source of revenue for free-to-air commercial broadcasters is invariably advertising, this characteristic is not adequate to differentiate between commercial broadcasters.

In summary, I will investigate in this study six economic factors which might have an impact on TV channels' news performance. The three factors on the macro level of television systems are the degree of market competition, the degree to which the respective television system depends on advertising as a source of revenue, and the relative position of public service broadcasting in the market. On the meso level of TV channels, the factors of interest are ownership structure and market research activity, and for the PSB channels in the sample, the degree to which they depend on advertising as a source of revenue.

3.2 News performance

As noted in the literature review, several authors discussed potential effects of economic influences on various factors concerning media performance such as media independence, professional autonomy of journalists, quality of news, and sensationalist reporting. One possibility to systematize these various concepts concerning media performance is to divide them into three subcategories: a) measurement of news content, b) organizational indicators of performance such as editorial independence, staff professionalism and impartiality, and c) financial commitment to news production (Hollifield, 2006). As mentioned above, news content should in my view be the main subject of this study. Organizational goals and strategies, financial commitment to the newsroom or professional autonomy of journalists are all factors shaping how news items are selected and packaged. However, it is on the basis of media content and, more specifically in the context of this study, news content that media organizations are assessed with regard to their public functions. The same applies to the perspective of the audience, as readers and viewers derive utility from news content itself, and not from structural factors behind the production of news.

Yet, discussing news content in terms of quality entails many difficulties, especially within the context of a comparative study. Quality of news is an exceptionally difficult and complex concept to define, as there are no universally accepted criteria to determine what good quality is and what is not. News workers, communication researchers, and members of the audience might have very different understandings of what constitutes high quality news. From a market perspective, one could say that good quality is what the audience wants. From a normative perspective, high quality news is what the news media are required to

deliver in order to fulfil their public functions within society (Benson, 2008). However, what the media should do in a democratic society differs very much from what an authoritarian regime would consider as the role of the media in its society. Under authoritarian regimes, the media should always be subordinate to the interests of the state in maintaining social order or achieving political goals (Siebert, Peterson, & Schramm, 1956). Even within democracies, there are different notions of good quality journalism. For example, the debate about development journalism and Asian values in journalism shows that in Asian democracies such as Japan, South Korea or Taiwan, Western-style notions of independent and critical media acting as a “watch-dog” of government might conflict with traditional Asian cultural values (Xu, 2009). Although the media should monitor the performance of government and make it transparent to the public, news reporting should also contribute to social stability, social harmony and economic development. To these purposes, journalists should act as government partners and be rather supportive instead of critical of government development efforts. In some instances, press freedom could be subjected to overriding national interests of social, economic or political development priorities.

In Western democracies, the ideal of a socially responsible press has become predominant²⁵ (Benson, 2008). Social responsibility theory was established through the U.S. Hutchins Commission on the Freedom of the Press and advocates that media have certain obligations to society and a responsibility to fulfil positive functions. With regard to news content, media should deliver news that satisfies the standards of informativeness, truth, accuracy, objectivity in terms of stressing factual reporting over commentary, balance of opposing viewpoints, neutrality through an observer role for the journalist, promotion of open debate, and representation of diverse views and voices in society.

Even within a single country, there are diverging notions of what constitutes high news quality. Taking the USA as an example, there has recently been a lively debate about the appropriate standard of news quality (Bennett, 2003; Patterson, 2003; Zaller, 2003). On the one hand, there are scholars arguing that the predominant scholarly notion of news quality is based on ideals of citizenship and quality that are neither realistic nor necessary.

²⁵ Other democratic theories of journalism include libertarian theory, developmental media theory, and democratic-participant theory. For a more detailed discussion of these normative theories, cf. Baran & Davis (2006); Benson (2008); Siebert, Peterson, & Schramm (1956).

Therefore, a less demanding standard of quality – the “Burglar Alarm standard” – is sufficient to satisfy informational needs of citizens in a democracy (Zaller, 2003). Others contend that the full standard of news in the social responsibility model should still be the benchmark to assess media performance (Bennett, 2003; Patterson, 1994).

To cover the whole breadth of the existing literature and establish an exhaustive and satisfying definition of news quality would go far beyond the scope of this study. Therefore, I will focus on only a few indicators of news performance that have repeatedly been mentioned in the discussion of potential effects of commercialization processes on news content. The most important aspect relates to the selection of topics for news reporting. Commercialized media are presumed to attract the audience’s attention by paying more attention to topics such as life style, sports and human interest to the neglect of news topics such as politics and economy (Beam, 2003; Bennett, 2005; Croteau & Hoynes, 2001; Siegert, 2003; Siegert et al., 2005). What kind of topics dominate news coverage is therefore one central aspect of news performance to be examined in this context. This aspect reflects what has been termed relevance, substance, or significance in literature on news quality (Arnold, 2008, 2009; Belt & Just, 2008; Daschmann, 2009; Köster & Wolling, 2006; Maurer, 2005; McQuail, 2005; Schatz & Schulz, 1992). As it is impossible to cover all ongoing events and existing issues, news media should cover those issues that are essential for the functioning of a democracy, namely information that enables citizens to be informed about current public affairs and to govern themselves effectively.

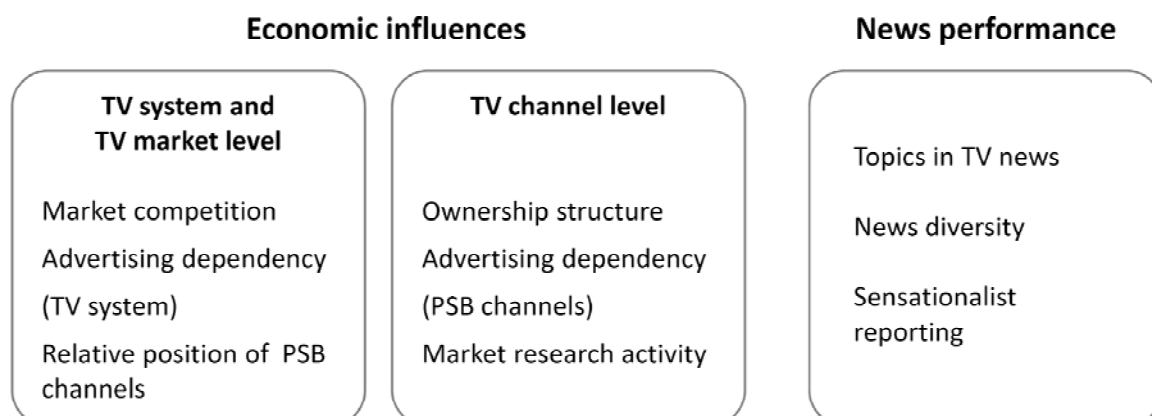
Diversity is another characteristic of news content supposedly undermined by commercial considerations: the priority of profit maximization and cost effectiveness leads to a development in which stories that may offend or costly news stories are ignored in favour of those more acceptable and entertaining to larger numbers of readers or viewers, resulting in a homogenization of media content, i.e. “more of the same” (Croteau & Hoynes, 2001; Picard, 2004; Siegert et al., 2005). This argument refers in the first instance to structural diversity of genres or programmes, but can also be related to content diversity in news. For the functioning of a pluralistic democracy, news should reflect the whole range of diversity in society concerning topics, viewpoints, political interests, geographic regions and sources of information (Arnold, 2008; Croteau & Hoynes, 2001; Köster & Wolling, 2006; McQuail,

1992; Schatz & Schulz, 1992). In short, three main dimensions of news diversity can be discerned: topic diversity, actor diversity, and diversity regarding domestic and foreign news.

Sensationalism in news reporting has also been repeatedly deplored by critics as a consequence of commercial influences (Croteau & Hoynes, 2001; Picard, 2005). Sensationalist news is seen as a journalistic device designed merely to attract the attention of large audiences at the expense of informing them properly about socially significant events (Vettehen, 2008; Vettehen, Nuijten, & Beentjes, 2005; Vettehen, Nuijten, & Peeters, 2008). Basic needs content, tabloid packaging and vivid storytelling are three categories of sensationalist features deemed able to attract the audience's attention. Stories about sex, violence, criminality, disasters, or famines are considered important and appealing to every person because they refer to basic human needs. Formal features in news report such as camera movements, uncommon editing techniques or decorative elements like background music represent unexpected or changing information and thus enhance sensationalist reporting. Vivid storytelling refers to the inclusion of concrete information or information of great proximity to the audience, such as the insertion of personal narratives of individual cases or brief comments by lay persons as an expression of the *vox populi* (Vettehen, 2008).

In a nutshell, I intend to investigate potential effects of economic influences on three aspects of news performance: topics covered in TV news, news diversity and the degree of sensationalism. These three aspects are frequently mentioned in theoretical discussions of news quality as well as in discussions on consequences of commercialization on news content. Figure 2 provides an overview of the economic influences on macro and meso level and the three aspects of news performance included in this study.

Figure 2: Economic influences and aspects of news performance under study



3.3 Country sample

The question about potential effects of economic influences on news performance is derived from theoretical discussions and empirical evidence provided by studies in the USA and, to a lesser extent, in Western European countries. Therefore, this study aims to answer this question in the first instance within the context of Western media systems. The media system typology developed by Hallin and Mancini (2004) offers a helpful classification of countries to be included in this study's sample. The characterization of their three models refers in important ways to economic factors in the respective media systems. Media systems in the Liberal model (United Kingdom, USA, Canada, and Ireland) are dominated by market mechanisms and commercial media (except for strong public service broadcasting in the UK and Ireland). In the Northern European or Democratic Corporatist model (Scandinavian countries, Austria, Belgium, Germany, Netherlands, and Switzerland), the historically strong party press has shifted toward politically neutral commercial papers with profit-making as the main purpose. Public service broadcasters still retain a strong position in these countries, but must fight to maintain audience shares in a mixed broadcasting system in which commercial broadcasters have a strong or even dominant position. In media systems of the Polarized Pluralist model (Mediterranean countries of Southern Europe), the position of commercial media is weaker than in the other two models due to integration of the media into party politics and a strong role of the state.

Hallin and Mancini apply a most similar systems design in their analysis and this design is also suitable for the present study. On the other hand, it is very well possible to follow both most similar systems design and most different systems design in one study (Esser, 2003). Therefore, I will conduct this study in most similar systems of Western Europe and North America in a first step. In a second step, I will extend the investigation to other, non-Western media systems to examine whether the postulated consequences of commercial factors are also valid beyond Western media systems. However, as there is a need for data on TV news content, media systems, and TV channels, the selection of these additional countries is limited to the availability of data on important concepts. Of central relevance is access to content analysis data of TV news, as content analyses require significant resources concerning funding and manpower, e.g. with regard to access to recordings of newscasts,

coders who are proficient in the respective language and media system, and supervisors of the coding process.

News content data for this study are provided by the Foreign News on TV project, a large-scale cross-national project with researchers from seventeen countries whose main aim is to investigate production, content, and reception of television news on national TV stations.²⁶ The seventeen countries are Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Chile, China, Egypt, Germany, Hong Kong, Israel, Italy, Japan, Poland, Portugal, Singapore, Switzerland, Taiwan, and the USA.

Seven countries from Hallin and Mancini's typology are included in this study's country sample: USA and Canada from the Liberal model; Belgium, Germany and Switzerland from the Democratic Corporatist model; and Italy and Portugal from the Polarized Pluralist model. The selection of these countries has several advantages (Hallin & Mancini, 2004): it enables to focus on a set of fairly comparable cases, as these countries have relatively comparable levels of economic development and much common culture and political history. Furthermore, as available data on media systems are limited and difficult to access, including European countries in the sample provides the advantage of access to the large amount of comparable data compiled on European media systems, e.g. via the MAVISE database of the European Audiovisual Observatory.

From the remaining countries with available content analysis data, I select four countries representing four different world regions: Poland (Eastern Europe), Chile (Latin America), Israel (Middle East), and Taiwan (Asia). The reasons behind this selection are both substantive and practical. On the practical side, news content data from Brazil, Egypt, and Japan are not available up to the time this study is carried out. The substantive rationale for the selection is that all countries in the sample are comparable in important regards: they

²⁶ The project was initiated by Akiba Cohen from Tel Aviv University who invited scholars from all around the world to investigate the way foreign news is presented on television. The study is divided into three parts and takes a multi-method approach including a content analysis of the newscasts, an audience survey, focus group discussions as well as in-depth interviews with journalists. Each country team conducts its study according to the commonly agreed procedures during the same time period. In the context of this study, I will analyze only data from the content analysis of television newscasts. I thank all project participants for sharing their data. A list of all project members is in Appendix A.

are all democracies with a free press²⁷ and economically relatively well developed,²⁸ and there is a dual broadcasting system of public and private channels.²⁹

In terms of comparative research methodology, the eleven countries and their respective media systems in the sample serve as context (Kohn, 1987). In “nation is context”-comparative studies, one is primarily interested in testing the generality of findings and interpretations of social phenomena in different countries; the primary interest is thus not in the countries for their own sakes (as in research studies with “nation as object”). This applies to the present study, in which these eleven countries provide the context within which potential consequences of economic influences on news performance are investigated; the countries are selected according to relevant characteristics and not for their own sakes. With eleven countries in the sample, there is naturally a limitation to how much attention can be paid to individual countries. On the other hand, the number of countries is still manageable so that I will point out interesting country-specific results whenever possible.

One qualification is important to stress here: media systems of individual countries are not always homogeneous. In some cases, there are different media systems within one single country which are characterized by regional variations. For example, Québécois media are distinct from the media in the rest of Canada in several ways, and the Flemish-, French-, and German-language communities in Belgium all have their own regulatory regime concerning audio-visual media. However, as media systems are mostly organized at the national level, I will treat countries as the main unit of analysis with regard to television systems. For the sake of simplicity, I will refer to the television systems in Belgium and Canada in the

²⁷ This criterion excludes China, Singapore and Egypt. The latter is formally a parliamentary democracy, but with the authoritarian president pulling political strings (Richter, 2008).

²⁸ The gross domestic product per capita at nominal values of the eleven countries in the sample ranges from 10,117 international dollars (Chile, rank 57 of all countries) to 46,859 international dollars (USA, rank 6) (International Monetary Fund, 2009).

²⁹ This criterion excludes Hong Kong, which has an autonomous media system, but no public television channel, and China, whose only national television network is CCTV, a state-owned television network whose evening newscast is aired simultaneously on all CCTV channels and the primary channel of each provincial station. Switzerland does not have a national private TV channel, but the public channels face significant competition from private channels from Germany, France, and Italy.

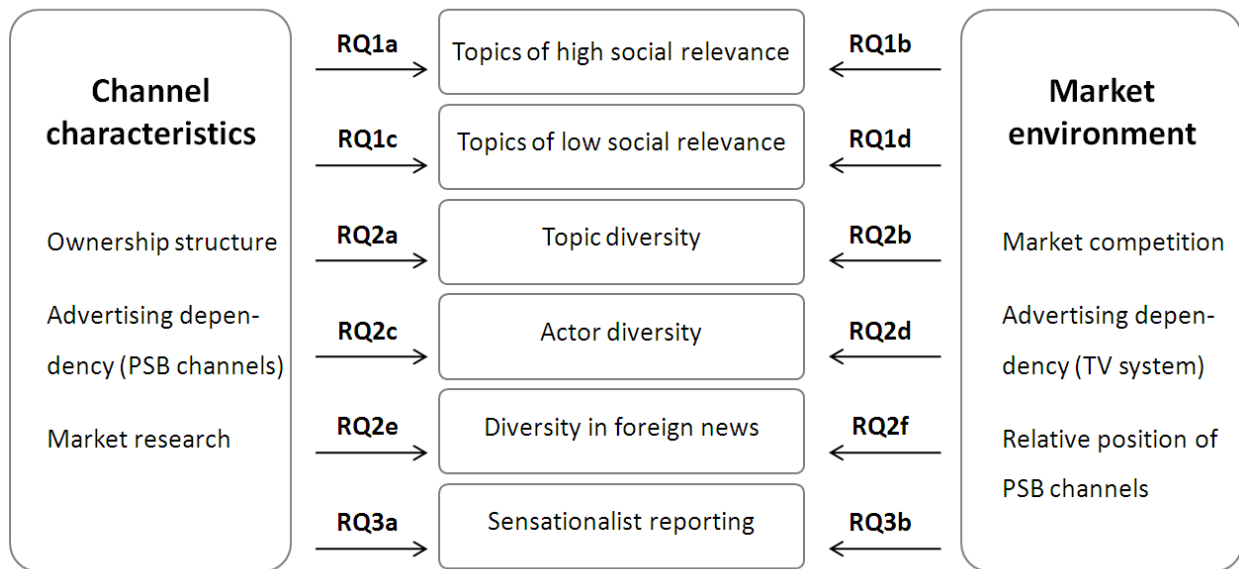
remaining of this study, but it is important to keep in mind that the discussion is restricted to Flanders and the English-speaking part of Canada, respectively.

3.4 Research questions

The overall aim of this study is to investigate potential consequences of commercialization on news content. As a result of the literature review, three aspects of commercialization on the level of television system – the degree of market competition, the extent of advertising dependency within the system and the relative position of public service broadcasting in the market – and three characteristics of TV channels – ownership structure, the extent of advertising dependency of PSB channels and the frequency of market research on news audience – have been identified as economic factors that supposedly have an influence on how TV news is selected and reported.

The literature review has also shown that empirical evidence for an assumed negative relationship between these influences and news performance is not as unambiguous as one might expect. For example, empirical studies on the relationship between market competition and news performance or between high market-orientation and news performance have proved to be rather inconclusive. Therefore, open research questions seem more appropriate than specific hypotheses on the relationship between individual economic influences and news performance. Furthermore, hypotheses on how individual economic factors influence news production can only be tested when all other influences are held constant. As will be shown in Chapter 4.5, the data structure in this study does not satisfy conventional statistical analyses' requirements to test individual independent variables' effect. For these reasons, I formulate a set of research questions addressing the influence the six economic factors under study exert on the three aspects of news performance discussed above: topics coverage, diversity and sensationalist reporting on TV news. Figure 3 gives an overview of these research questions.

Figure 3: Research questions on economic influences on news performance



The research questions are as follows:

RQ1a: *Which channel characteristics lead to a high amount of airtime devoted to socially relevant topics and which channel characteristics lead to a low coverage of these topics?*

RQ1b: *In which market environment do TV channels devote a large amount of airtime to socially relevant topics and in which market environment do TV channels devote a small amount of airtime to these topics?*

RQ1c: *Which channel characteristics lead to a high amount of airtime devoted to topics of low social relevance and which channel characteristics lead to a low coverage of these topics?*

RQ1d: *In which market environment do TV channels devote a large amount of airtime to topics of low social relevance and in which market environment do TV channels devote a small amount of airtime to these topics?*

RQ2a: *Which channel characteristics are conducive to high topic diversity in TV news and which channel characteristics lead to low topic diversity?*

RQ2b: *In which market environment do TV channels produce high topic diversity in TV news and in which market environment do TV channels produce news of low topic diversity?*

RQ2c: *Which channel characteristics are conducive to high actor diversity in TV news and which channel characteristics lead to low actor diversity?*

RQ2d: *In which market environment do TV channels produce high actor diversity in TV news and in which market environment do TV channels produce news of low actor diversity?*

RQ2e: *Which channel characteristics lead to a high diversity in foreign news and which channel characteristics lead to low diversity in foreign news?*

RQ2f: *In which market environment do TV channels produce diverse foreign news and in which market environment do TV channels produce foreign news of low diversity?*

RQ3a: *Which channel characteristics lead to a sensationalist reporting in TV news and which channel characteristics impede this kind of reporting?*

RQ3b: *In which market environment do TV channels show a sensationalist reporting in TV news and in which market environment do TV channels not tend to this kind of reporting?*

It is reasonable to assume that channel characteristics and market environment do not operate independently but that some channel characteristics only exert influences on news production when these TV channels operate in a certain market environment. Conversely, some TV channels might be able to resist pressures from a commercialized market environment depending on its ownership, revenue structure and degree of market-orientation. Therefore, I will also take into consideration combinations of channel characteristics and market environment that potentially have an effect on news performance.

The last research question relates to the relative importance of system level and channel level influences. If the market environment in which TV channels operate exerts a greater influence on news production than channel characteristics, then one might expect that TV channels from the same country fare relatively similar to each other regarding news performance and differ substantially from TV channels in other countries. Empirical studies indicate that national characteristics have remained influential in explaining differences in TV news (Esser, 2008; Esser, Nguyen Vu, & Spanier, 2009). On the other hand, there is also empirical indication that ownership structure matters as shown by the discussion of

performance differences between public service and commercial channels (cf. Chapter 2.2.1).

RQ4: *Are channel characteristics or is the market environment in which TV channels operate more influential in explaining news performance?*

In order to answer these research questions, it is necessary to conduct a content analysis of TV news and link the findings to characteristics of TV channels and TV markets in the countries included in the sample. The following chapter will discuss the methodological steps required for the data collection and data analysis.

4 Methodology

4.1 Content analysis of TV news

TV news content data for this study come from a content analysis of the main evening newscasts in the eleven countries mentioned above. In all but one of these countries, the main evening television news aired on the most heavily viewed public and commercial TV channel are content-analyzed on the basis of a common codebook. Only in the case of Switzerland, the content analysis covered the evening newscasts of two PBS channels, as there is no commercial TV station with channels coverage.

The content analysis covers four weeks from January to April 2008: January 20 – 26, February 10 – 16, March 2 – 8, and March 23 – 29. The rationale for this sampling procedure is on the one hand to have an extensive time period in the content analysis, as most prior international comparative content analyses cover only a shorter time span of maximum two weeks (Wilke, 2008). On the other hand, sampling natural weeks instead of constructed week enables to follow important international news events that unfolded over several days. All newscasts were recorded and content-analyzed in their entirety. Table 1 gives an overview of the sample including the name of the PBS and commercial channels from each country,³⁰ the number of newscasts and news stories analyzed and their average length. In total, 606 newscasts (335 hours of recording) were coded in the eleven countries in the sample.

Major events which generated significant international coverage during the four weeks of the content analysis included the U.S. primaries, the elections in Russia, the conflict between Israel and Palestine regarding the Gaza strip, the Italian cabinet crisis, the tensions between Colombia, Venezuela and Ecuador, the riots in Tibet, the elections and subsequent crisis in Kenya, and the beginning of the financial crisis. However, there was no news event that dominated international TV news completely in the magnitude of the terrorist attacks on September 11th 2001 or the beginning of the Iraq war in 2003.³¹

³⁰ In the remaining of this study, I will refer to individual TV channels by abbreviations denoting the country and name of the respective channel. For example, the Belgian channel VRT is referred to as BEL_VRT, the Canadian channel CBC as CDN_CBC and so on.

Table 1: The sample

Country	TV-Channel	Newscast	Total news-hole [min]	# News-casts	Ø Length news-casts [min]****	# News stories	Ø Length news stories [sec]
Belgium	VRT* (Flemish Radio and Television Network)	Het Journaal	967	28	34.5	774	75
	VTM (Flemish Television Company)	Het Nieuws	1007	28	36.0	646	94
Canada	CBC* (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation)	The National	1102	28	39.4	406	163
	CTV (Canadian Television Network)	CTV NEWS	574	28	20.5	343	100
Chile	TVN* (Televisión Nacional de Chile)	24 Horas	1216	28	43.4	709	103
	Mega (Red Televisiva Megavisión)	Meganoticias	1275	28	45.5	797	96
Germany	ARD* (Consortium of public-law broadcasting institutions)	Tagesschau	380	28	13.6	335	68
	RTL (Radio Télévision Luxembourg)	RTL aktuell	489	28	17.5	407	72
Israel**	IBA* (Israel Broadcasting Authority)	Mabat	751	27	27.8	548	82
	Arutz 2 (Channel 2)	Hadashot 2	937	28	33.5	580	97
Italy	RAI 1* (Radio Televisione Italiana Uno)	Telegiornale 1	866	28	30.9	737	71
	Canale 5	Telegiornale 5	831	28	29.7	628	80
Poland	TVP* (Polish Television)	Wiadomosci	621	28	22.2	279	133
	TVN (New Television)	Fakty	640	28	22.9	261	147
Portugal	RTP* (Radio and Television of Portugal)	Telejornal	1392	28	49.7	841	99
	TVI (Independent Television)	Jornal Nacional	1690	28	60.4	866	117
Switzerland	SF* (Swiss Television)	Tagesschau	641	28	22.9	489	79
	TSR* (French-Swiss Television)	Le Journal	739	28	26.4	542	82
Taiwan	PTS* (Public Television Service)	PTS Prime Time News	950	28	33.9	545	105
	TVBS (Television Broadcasting Satellite)	TVBS Prime Time News	1489	28	53.2	801	112
USA***	PBS* (Public Broadcasting Service)	NewsHour with Jim Lehrer	985	20	49.2	298	198
	NBC (National Broadcasting Company)	NBC Nightly News	555	27	20.5	356	93
Total	12 public service channels and 10 commercial channels		20096	606	33.2	12188	99

Note: * Public service channel ** In Israel, there was no newscast on IBA on March 6th because of a terrorist attack in Jerusalem.

*** In the USA, there were no newscasts on March 23rd and no PBS newscasts on Saturday and Sunday.

**** The calculated newscast lengths are slightly shorter than the aired newscasts because headlines, recaps and advertising breaks are not included.

The leading researchers in all national teams first determined how to segment the newscasts into individual news stories according to commonly agreed procedures. A news story is identified by the criteria content and format. News stories are distinguished from each other when the topic or the location of the story changes, this identification is usually aided by formal breaking points. Typical examples of news items are edited news reports consisting of the news anchor's introduction, a news report with voice-over of the reporter and possibly a short comment afterwards; news stories in a block of items (e.g. in foreign news block) separated from other items by brief visual indication (flash, fading, etc.) or by a specific sound; live (or taped) in-studio interviews with a home-journalist or experts commenting on current issues and events.

All news stories identified in this manner were coded using an extensive codebook with 80 variables.³² Each news story is coded with regard to the following features:

- Topics (up to three topics can be coded for one news story)
- Length and prominence within the newscast (placement, mentioning in headlines, promos or recaps)
- Style of presentation and visualization (formal features such as interview, block of items, visual material from news agencies and use of visual elements such as tables, charts etc.)
- Use of sensationalist features in reporting (e.g. background music, slow motion or speeded up motion, repetition of visuals, presentation of extreme emotions or gory visuals)
- Time perspective and potential impact of the underlying event
- Nature of the news story regarding domestic or foreign news
- Foreign news: countries or organizations involved in the event, use of domestication elements (such as reference to nationals of country of broadcast or potential impact on country of broadcast)

³¹ The outbreak of the Iraq war for example was a major influence on the results of the content analysis by Rössler (2004).

³² The entire codebook is in Appendix B.

- Conflict in news (nature of the conflict, parties involved in the conflict, negotiations, violence and damage)
- Actors (individuals or groups appearing in the news story)

4.2 Operationalization of news performance

As discussed in Chapter 3.2, TV news performance is analyzed with regard to three aspects: topics covered in news (relevance), diversity in news, and sensationalist reporting.

4.2.1 Topic coverage

News topics were coded with an extensive list of 274 individual topics.³³ Each news story can be coded with up to three of these individual topics. For the sake of clarity, I recoded these 274 individual topics into ten main categories:

- Politics (including internal and international politics), military and defence
- Economy (including business, commerce, labour and industrial relations)
- Social issues (such as transportation, health, welfare, social services, population, education, housing, social relations, and communication)
- Culture (including religion and ceremonies)
- Environment and science (including technology and energy)
- Internal order (such as demonstration, terrorism, corruption, and judicial decisions)
- Sports
- Crime and violence (such as murder, robbery and rape)
- Fashion, human interest and weather
- Accidents and disasters

As specified in research questions RQ1a and RQ1b, one central point of interest in this study is to ascertain how much attention TV channels operating in a commercialized environment pay to topics of high social relevance (but presumable not very attractive to a large audience). Naturally, it is disputable how to classify the significance of a topic. From a

³³ The complete list of individual topics is in Appendix C.

democratic theory perspective, socially significant issues and events have importance, impact and consequence on the social system as a whole (Köster & Wolling, 2006; Shoemaker & Cohen, 2006). Events such as elections have high social relevance because the electorate needs to be well informed about the representatives they are about to elect for the next legislative period. Economic developments are socially relevant because they determine the economic well-being of nations, as could be seen in the financial and economic crisis that broke out in 2008. In this study, politics and economy are considered as topics of high social relevance. Topics of low social relevance but presumable able to attract the audience's attention are crime and violence, fashion, human interest, weather, accidents, and disasters. The remaining topics are considered as topics of medium social relevance.³⁴ This classification is oriented toward the operationalization of social relevance already employed in other studies such as the investigations by Belt and Just (2008), Köster and Wolling (2006), Krüger (2009), and Maurer (2006).

When analyzing the amount of coverage dedicated to these ten topic categories, it is important not to consider the number of news items that deal with specific topics but the amount of airtime devoted to these topics because news items varied significantly in lengths. Otherwise, the significance of short stories that appear in blocks (e.g. the foreign news block or the sports block) will be overestimated and the significance of long and elaborate news stories underestimated. If one news item is coded with two or three topics, the total length of this item will be divided by the number of topics coded. For example, a news item about fiscal politics with a length of 100 seconds will be coded in both categories politics and economy, and the amount of time devoted to each category is calculated as half of the total length, i.e. 50 seconds.

Another way to operationalize the importance news editors assigned to each of the ten topic categories is to analyze which categories are highlighted in form of mentions in the

³⁴ Sports might also be considered as having low social relevance (Belt & Just, 2008). However, the countries in the sample vary substantially in the role sports play in TV news: in some countries, sports are included in the main news bulletin whereas in others, there is a separate programme dedicated to sports coverage alone. Therefore, I list sports among topics with medium social relevance so that sport coverage is neither considered in the analysis of highly relevant topics nor in the analysis of less relevant topics.

headlines. The underlying assumption is that the most important news stories of the day will be mentioned in headlines leading in the news bulletins.

4.2.2 News diversity

Diversity of news has three main dimensions: topic diversity, actor diversity and diversity regarding domestic and foreign news (cf. Chapter 3.2). Topic diversity is measured by the relative entropy index.³⁵ This index can be used for measuring diversity in very different contexts, e.g. in TV programmes (Hellman, 2001) or TV news (Köster & Wolling, 2006). The index is calculated as follows:

$$H = (-\sum p_i \log_2 p_i) / \log_2 K$$

p_i denotes the relative frequency of one given category i within the mix and K denotes the number of categories given. The relative entropy index is standardized³⁶ so that its values vary between 0 and 1. High relative entropy close to 1 implies that many or all types of news are equally represented in the mix and values close to 0 indicate low diversity (e.g. when all stories belong to one category). The relative entropy is superior to other measures such as the concentration index because it takes into account the number of categories available. Compared to the Hirschmann-Herfindahl-Index, the relative entropy is less sensitive to the number of categories utilized and is more intuitive, as high values of relative entropy indicate more diversity and low values indicate less diversity. The Hirschmann-Herfindahl-Index operates upside down, with low values signifying high diversity and vice versa (Hellman, 2001).

In this study, I will first calculate the relative entropy index with regard to topics on the level of newscasts. Thus, each individual newscast has a relative entropy value depending on the amount of airtime devoted to the ten topic categories in this newscast. For example, if all news stories within one newscast deal with the same topic, the relative entropy will be 0. If

³⁵ The concept of entropy was originally devised by Claude Shannon in 1948 and is the measure of the amount of information in a message.

³⁶ The numerator in the formula represents the absolute entropy and the denominator denotes the maximum entropy possible with K categories. The relative entropy is obtained by dividing the absolute entropy by the maximum value possible.

each tenth of a newscast is devoted to one of the ten topic categories, the index will take the value of 1. A disadvantage of using the unweighted relative entropy index is that it stands in contrast to the standard of relevance. A high entropy value close to 1 indicates high diversity, but this also means that the amount of airtime devoted to more socially relevant categories like politics is comparable to the amount of airtime devoted to less relevant categories. However, diversity should not be achieved at the expense of relevance and a unweighted diversity measure is not an appropriate operationalization of good news performance. Therefore, in addition to the unweighted relative entropy, I will calculate a normatively weighted relative entropy index as suggested by Köster and Wolling (2006). The idea behind the normatively weighted index is that diversity is only a good operationalization of news performance if it is a diversity of relevant topics. In other words, good news performance is characterized by more airtime devoted to socially relevant topics and less airtime devoted to less relevant topics, but also by the degree to which all different topics are covered.³⁷

As discussed in Chapter 3.2, diversity of news does not only apply to topics of news stories, but also to viewpoints and political interests presented in the news. To investigate this aspect of diversity, I will calculate the speaking time assigned to different groups of actors and the relative entropy concerning actors' presence in the newscast. Actors are defined as people who appear in the newscast as individuals or representing some entity, e.g. country, commercial firm or social group and are shown speaking in their own words. Up to ten actors can be coded in each news item. Each actor's role is coded by means of an extensive list of 155 different roles reflecting to a large degree the diversity as represented in the list of topics (Appendix C). For the sake of simplicity, I recoded all actor roles into seven main categories:

- Actors of high status in the areas of politics, military, and economy (e.g. head of state, prime minister, ambassador, chief of staff, central bank president, leader of trade union etc.)
- Actor of middle and low status in the areas of politics, military, and economy (e.g. midlevel government officials, rank and file member of parliament, volunteers or

³⁷ The weighting procedure is described in more detail in Chapter 5.2.1.

activist in international organization, army officer, small business owner, company employees etc.)

- Actor of high status in the areas of social issues, culture, environment, science, and internal order (e.g. head of police, chief of highest court, head of social service agency, top religious leader etc.)
- Actor of middle and low status in the areas of social issues, culture, environment, science, and internal order (e.g. low level judges, workers in health and social services, experts in transportation, science, environment etc.)
- Actor of high status in the areas of sports and human interest (e.g. very famous athletes and coaches, celebrities of great notoriety, kings and queens etc.)
- Actor of middle and low status in the areas of sports and human interest (e.g. moderately famous athletes and coaches, less famous celebrities, low level member of royal family etc.)
- Citizens and member of the public (e.g. “man in the street” opinion statement, victims or survivors of events, sports supporters, spectators etc.)

These seven categories reflect both the topic areas and the status of the actor involved. For the sake of simplicity, topic areas are now differentiated only between topics of highest, middle and low social relevance (see differentiation of topics). The status of actor in each of these three areas should be taken into consideration because diversity in news is also characterized by the extent to which not only actors of high status appear in the newscasts. By the same token, diverse news should also include actors from the last category which represents people without official function or prominence. The underlying reason is that people affected by news events – citizens, patients etc. – or ordinary members of the public should also have a say in the mass media.

Actor diversity is also measured by the relative entropy index. Basis for the analysis of actor diversity is the cumulative speaking time of all actors within a newscast. In a first step, I calculate the proportion of speaking time of each group of actors. Based on these relative frequencies, the relative entropy is calculated in a second step. The interpretation of the relative entropy index of actors is similar to the relative entropy index of topics: if all actors that appear speaking in a newscast belong to one category, the index takes the value 0; if

each 14% (one-seventh) of the cumulative speaking time of all actors is granted to actors in each category, the index takes the value 1.³⁸

Another aspect of news diversity is related to the amount of foreign news and the diversity of countries represented in foreign news. The rationale behind this analysis is that the breadth of coverage in foreign news is significantly affected by economic considerations. Especially in the USA, where news audience is supposedly not interested in foreign news (PEJ, 2008), the three major networks NBC, ABC and CBS have closed roughly half of their foreign bureaus in the last thirty years (PEJ, 2009).³⁹ Lacking correspondents who are familiar with and knowledgeable in current affairs of countries they are stationed in, the network newscasts can only rely on footage of international news agencies about these countries. These news agencies, however, are not present in a large number of developing countries (Wu, 2000, 2003) so that these countries are accordingly under- or not represented at all in U.S. network news.

I will first investigate the amount of domestic and foreign news in the newscasts of all TV channels. Domestic news is coded when the event reported only concerned the country of broadcast, foreign news is coded when the news event took place abroad and the country of broadcast is not involved in any way. Two hybrid categories, “domestic news with foreign involvement” or “foreign news with domestic involvement” are coded when the news event took place in the country of broadcast but at least one other country is involved or when the event took place in a foreign country but there is involvement by the country of broadcast, respectively. “Involvement” is defined as whether the country was mentioned in the news story, and up to five countries could be coded as involved in a single news story.

Based on the coding of countries involved in all news stories, I will calculate a diversity index of countries reported using a channel-level measure (in contrast to the newscast-level

³⁸ It is also possible to calculate a normatively weighted relative entropy index of actor diversity in the sense that actors of high status should be granted more speaking time than low status actors. However, for reasons that will be specified in Chapter 5.2.1, I will not weight the relative entropy index of actor diversity.

³⁹ In the last two years, however, the U.S. networks have increased the number of overseas bureaus, but these are usually one-person outposts with a single staffer who served as a reporter, producer and videographer.

measure of the relative entropy).⁴⁰ Following Chan et al. (2009), I calculate the percentage of all country-mentions obtained by the ten and five most frequently mentioned countries in foreign news (with or without domestic involvement) and call this diversity index country-concentration index (CCI(5) and CCI(10)). For instance, in all foreign news stories on the U.S. network NBC, there were 104 mentions of countries involved in the news event. The five most frequently mentioned countries on NBC were Iraq (22 mentions), Israel (10), Palestine (9), China (6), and Columbia (5). Thus, the CCI(5) value for NBC is $(22 + 10 + 9 + 6 + 5) / 104 = 52 / 104 = 50\%$. By the same token, the five most frequently mentioned countries on the German public channel ARD are USA (42 mentions), France (18), Russia (18), Israel (16), and Palestine (13). The total number of country-mentions is 303, so that a CCI(5) value of $(42 + 18 + 18 + 16 + 13) / 303 = 107 / 303 = 35\%$ is obtained for ARD. The ten most frequently mentioned countries on NBC were mentioned 75 times, resulting in a CCI(10) of 72% for NBC. The corresponding CCI(10) value for ARD is 52%. Both CCI values for NBC are higher than those of ARD, signifying a higher concentration, i.e. less diversity with regard to countries covered in foreign news.

4.2.3 Sensationalist reporting

Sensationalist reporting is operationalized based on Vettehen's discussion of three categories of sensationalist features deemed able to attract the audience's attention (Vettehen, 2008; Vettehen et al., 2008). The first category refers to the story subject because according to Vettehen, contents that refer to basic human needs are considered important and appealing to every person. Thus, news items about murder, robbery, rape, accidents and disasters are coded as sensational news items. The second operationalization refers to tabloid packaging. A news story is considered as tabloid packaged if at least one of the following indicators of sensationalism is present: use of background music, slow motion pictures, speeded up motion pictures, repetition of visuals, gory visuals, soft focus, colour change, digitization to conceal identity of people, audio with distorted human voice, and presentation of extreme emotion. The third feature of sensationalist reporting is vivid

⁴⁰ The relative entropy index is not appropriate in this context because there are too many categories (245 countries, see Appendix E) so that a calculation of relative entropy based on all countries will yield very low values with little variance.

storytelling. This feature is measured by a surrogate that measures whether or not short interviews with laypersons are inserted into the news item. Laypersons are defined as actors in news stories who are clearly identified as “man in the street”, victims, survivors and witnesses of some events or anonymous citizens.⁴¹

Table 2 gives an overview about the operationalizations of news performance and the variables used in the codebook (Appendix B):

Table 2: Operationalizations of news performance

Dimension of news performance	Operationalization	Variable in codebook
Relevance	Amount of airtime devoted to topics of high social relevance	v6, v7, v8, v14
	Amount of airtime devoted to topics of low social relevance	v6, v7, v8, v14
	Topics mentioned in headlines of newscast	v6, v7, v8, v9
Diversity	Relative entropy of topics in newscasts (unweighted and normatively weighted)	v6, v7, v8, v14
	Relative entropy of speaking time of actors in newscasts	a1, b1, c1 etc.; a6, b6, c6 etc.
	Amount of airtime devoted to foreign news	v14, v50
	Diversity of countries covered in foreign news (CCI)	v50, v55, v56, v57, v58, v59
Sensationalist reporting	Sensational topics in newscasts	v6, v7, v8
	Tabloid packaging	v36 to v45
	Insertion of interviews with laypersons	a1, b1, c1 etc.

⁴¹ This last operationalization seems at odds with the assumption about the inclusion of laypersons as members of the public as contributing to diversity in news (see Chapter 4.2.2). This seeming contradiction can be dissolved by considering the amount of personal narratives included in the news: granting members of the public a reasonable amount of airtime to voice their opinion increases news diversity; in contrast, relying excessively on readily available “man in the street” opinion statements only covers up a poverty of sources and is rather evidence of a lack of thorough investigation.

4.3 Operationalization of economic influences

Data on economic factors deemed to exert an influence on news performance are drawn from a variety of sources. Most data on system level variables are gathered from publicly available sources (e.g. the CIA World Factbook, the MAVISE database by the European Audiovisual Observatory, or the regulatory agencies for broadcasting in some countries) or provided by commercial entities (e.g. the World Press Trends by the World Association of Newspapers (WAN) or the World Advertising Trends by the World Advertising Research Center (WARC)). Data on TV channels are provided by the project participants who obtained the relevant data through Internet research or direct enquiry with the respective TV channel.

The degree of market competition faced by the TV newscasts in the sample is measured with regard to three different aspects. First, the degree of intra-media competition is measured, i.e. the number of newscasts competing for the same audience in the same market. In the context of newscasts in the content analysis, this refers to the number of evening prime-time newscasts. This information is provided by the project participants as experts on media in their respective country. As the countries differ greatly in population size, I calculated the size of the potential audience each newscast can reach by dividing the size of the population aged 15 and older⁴² by the number of competing newscasts. For example, in Chile, there are four evening newscasts competing for a national audience of 12.8 million adults, so that on average, the size of the potential audience for each newscast is around 3.2 million viewers. The underlying assumption is that the smaller the potential audience size each newscast could reach, the fiercer the competition for audience in the respective market will be.

Apart from competing newscasts, market pressure faced by TV newscasts also comes from inter-media competition. Therefore, I also consider newspaper circulation as one relevant aspect of market competition, assuming that newspapers are an important alternative source of information beside television news. Another important aspect is the Internet penetration, as the Internet has in many countries become one important sources of news (Hasebrink & Herzog, 2009). The metric of both indicators is based on the size of the

⁴² The assumption here is that younger people are not regular consumers of TV news.

population aged 15 and older and thus directly comparable to the measurement of potential newscast audience (Table 3).

Data collection of the two remaining economic factors on the level of television system is relatively straightforward. The degree to which the whole television system depends on advertising as a source of revenue is measured by the amount of adspend for media in percentage of the gross domestic product and the proportion of adspend for television out of the total amount of adspend. This information is provided by the World Advertising Research Center (2007). To determine the relative position of public service TV channels in the respective market, I compiled data on the market shares reached by all public service channels in the eleven countries in the sample. These data are drawn from a variety of publicly accessible sources and provided by the participants of the Foreign News on TV project. Table 3 shows data on all three economic factors on the macro level.

Data on variables on TV channel level are also provided by the project members. The extent to which each TV channel depends on advertising as a source of revenue is measured by the share of revenue that is derived from advertising.⁴³ Ownership structure of TV channels varies between public service and commercial channels.⁴⁴ For commercial channels, it is also coded whether their company's shares are traded on the stock market or not. Market research activity is measured by the frequency market research on news audience is carried out.⁴⁵ Table 4 shows data on the three factors on the meso level of TV channels.

⁴³ This indicator is measured on an ordinal scale: no revenue derived from advertising; 1% to 25%; 26% to 50%; 51% to 76%; 76% to 100%.

⁴⁴ There are two exceptions: The Chilean channel TVN is state-owned, but can be considered as comparable to public service channels because its mission statement is very similar to one of a public service channel. The Israeli commercial channel Arutz2 is a company with eight people on the board of directors. Four directors are representatives of the publicly regulated Second Authority for Television and Radio and four represent the two franchises that run the programs. Each of the two franchises is owned by a group of companies, some of whom are public corporations whose stocks are traded, and several rich individuals. However, there is no share of Arutz2 publicly traded on the stock market.

⁴⁵ This indicator is also measured on an ordinal scale: no market research at all; less than once a year; once a year; several times a year.

Table 3: Indicators of macro-level economic influences

Country	Population ≥ 15 years ^{a)} [m]	Competing newscasts	Potential audience size per newscast	Newspaper circulation per 1000 adults ^{b)}	Internet penetration ^{a)}	Adspend for media as % of GDP ^{c)}	Adspend for TV as % of total adspend ^{c)}	Total share of all PSB channels ^{d)}
Belgium ^{e)}	5.1 ^{f)}	3	1.7	190	60%	0.77%	35.3%	40.0%
Canada ^{e)}	19.1 ^{f)}	3	6.4	223	100%	0.81%	32.0%	5.4%
Chile	12.8	4	3.2	64	44%	0.64%	49.8%	19.0%
Germany	71.1	6	11.8	299	60%	0.75%	26.3%	39.3%
Israel	5.2	3	1.7	178	38%	0.58%	34.4%	6.0%
Italy	50.3	7	7.2	205	64%	0.60%	53.0%	41.8%
Poland	32.7	4	8.2	176	49%	1.14%	51.4%	39.4%
Portugal	9.0	3	3.0	106	62%	1.34%	55.8%	30.0%
Switzerland ^{e) g)}	4.1/1.3	1/1	4.1/1.3	547	72%	0.79%	16.4%	32.9%
Taiwan	19.1	11	1.7	230	77%	0.38%	54.9%	5.0%
USA	245.3	6	40.9	229	91%	1.23%	38.4%	2%

Note: a) Source: CIA World Factbook (2009)

b) Newspaper circulation is calculated by dividing the absolute newspaper circulation in 2006 (WAN, 2007) by the size of adult population.

c) Source: World Advertising Research Center (2007)

d) Sources: ard.de, CRTC (2009), Israel Audience Research Board, MAVISE database (2009), publicadata.ch, Public Television Service Foundation Annual Report (2008), State of the News Media (2009), Iyengar & McGrady (2007)

e) For Belgium, Canada and Switzerland, data on newspaper circulation, Internet penetration, ad spend and share of PSB channels are on national level.

f) Belgium: only Flemish speaking population; Canada: only English speaking population

g) Switzerland: data on population size, number of competing newscasts and potential audience size are shown separately for the German- and French-language communities

Table 4: Indicators of meso-level economic influences

TV-Channel	Ownership	Listed on the stock market	Revenues derived from advertising	Frequency of market research
BEL_VRT	public	no	1% to 25%	Several times a year
BEL_VTM	group	no	76% to 100%	Several times a year
CDN_CBC	public	no	26% to 50%	Several times a year
CDN_CTV	group	yes	76% to 100%	Several times a year
CHI_TVN	state-owned	no	76% to 100%	Several times a year
CHI_Mega	group	no	76% to 100%	Several times a year
GER_ARD	public	no	1% to 25%	Once a year
GER_RTL	group	yes	76% to 100%	Several times a year
ISR_IBA	public	no	No revenue from advertising	Several times a year
ISR_Arutz2	franchised	no	76% to 100%	Once a year
ITA_RAI1	public	no	26% to 50%	Several times a year
ITA_Canal5	group	yes	76% to 100%	Several times a year
POL_TVP1	public	no	26% to 50%	Several times a year
POL_TVN	group	yes	76% to 100%	Several times a year
POR_RTP	public	no	26% to 50%	Several times a year
POR_TVI	group	yes	76% to 100%	Several times a year
SUI_SF	public	no	26% to 50%	Several times a year
SUI_TSR	public	no	26% to 50%	Several times a year
TPE PTS	public	no	No revenue from advertising	Less than once a year
TPE_TVBS	group	no	76% to 100%	Less than once a year
USA_PBS	public	no	No revenue from advertising	Several times a year
USA_NBC	group	yes	76% to 100%	Several times a year

The indicators of economic influences and dimensions of news performance constitute a hierarchical data structure with data on different levels: television system, TV channel, newscast and news story. This particular data structure poses several challenges for the data analysis. Yet, before I discuss these challenges and present a method of data analysis to meet them, I will first address an important methodological issue within comparative research, namely how to achieve functional equivalence.

4.4 Functional equivalence in comparative research

Comparability and the maintenance of functional equivalence are the major challenges for every comparative study (Vijver, 1998; Wirth & Kolb, 2004), particularly in studies employing an etic strategy of operationalization like the present one. These challenges result from the “travelling problem” of constructs such as commercialization and news performance, as they have to be conceptualized on a highly abstract level in order to be “exported” to different contexts. Generally, equivalence concerning operationalization has to be maintained with regard to five aspects: instrument equivalence, item equivalence, sample equivalence, administration equivalence and construct equivalence (Esser, 2003; Wirth & Kolb, 2004).

As specified above, most data used in this study come from the large international project Foreign News on TV. Collaborators from all national teams follow commonly agreed procedures in order to ensure administrative equivalence. The critical process of data cleaning and data merging has been carried out centrally by the author, so that the quality of the TV news content data is standardized. Through a series of meetings prior to and during the data collection, all project members took part in a collaborative effort to develop the codebook, the central instrument in the content analysis. Thus, item equivalence could be established because only those items all project members agreed to, i.e. items having the same meaning across all participating countries, are included in the codebook. The leading researchers of each team trained the coders in their respective country so that the common English codebook can be used and understood in all participating countries, thus ensuring instrument equivalence.

Instrument and item equivalence do not only have to be maintained during the development of the codebook but also during the actual coding process, as coders might understand items differently because of their cultural background. In order to avoid bias, the extent of subjective assessment on the part of coders was held at a minimum. To facilitate the coding of topics, for example, an extensive list of subtopics was provided so that coders had ample illustrations of news stories in politics or social issues. The same applies to the role of actors. Regarding most variables on formal and stylistic elements, coders only have to code whether the respective element is present or absent and no further judgement regarding quantity or quality was required.

The common sampling procedures helped establish sample equivalence. Although the newscasts differ in length and number of news stories within the newscast (see Table 1), functional equivalence can be assumed because the newscasts sampled are all main evening television news bulletins aired on the most heavily viewed public and commercial TV channel.⁴⁶ On the level of individual news stories, equivalence is established by means of very detailed instructions on how to segment the newscasts into individual news items and because the leading researchers of each team carried out this task themselves.

Construct equivalence is the standard in comparative research that is the most difficult to achieve. Regarding the factors indicating commercialization, care has been taken to operationalize these factors by straightforward and objective criteria. For example, market competition is measured by directly comparable data: number of newscasts competing for the same audience, i.e. evening newscasts with national coverage, newspaper circulation and Internet penetration in adult population. None of these measures requires any subjective evaluation that might be liable to cultural idiosyncrasies. By the same token, variables on TV channel level are also operationalized by criteria not requiring any subjective assessment. The proportion of revenues derived from advertising and the frequency of market research activity are two cases in point. Ownership structure is a good example for the “travelling problem” of abstract concepts such as public service broadcasting. Defining PSB in terms of institutional and financial matters would restrict PSB to European public broadcasters, as European PSB stations are generally set up by law and financed by public funds (McQuail, 2005). However, this restriction will preclude stations in non-European countries which are functionally equivalent to the European notion of public service broadcasting. Therefore, public service broadcasters should be identified according to the more abstract criterion of their goals, namely universality of coverage, pluralistic and varied programming that also caters for minorities, independence of both government and market forces, concern for national culture, and accountability toward society and the audience (Bardoel, 2008; McQuail, 2005). In this sense, the Chilean station TVN can also be regarded as a public service channel – although it is state-owned and financed completely by

⁴⁶ Switzerland is an exception because in this country, there is no commercial broadcaster airing news bulletins with national coverage. Therefore, both newscasts in the sample are aired by public service broadcasters, one in the German-language and the other in the French-language speaking part of Switzerland.

advertising – because its mission includes some of the values common to public service channels.

News performance is likewise an abstract concept whose construct equivalence has to be established. Similar to aspects of commercialization, I employ only those indicators of news performance that are not culturally specific. News topics can be considered as comparable across all countries, as there is no reason to assume that politics, sports, or accidents have different meanings in different countries. Similarly, roles of actors are comparable in all participating countries. Thus, with regard to the dimensions of news performance relevance and diversity (topics and actors), construct equivalence can be presumed. Construct equivalence concerning sensationalism is more difficult to establish, as sensationalist reporting might be understood differently in different cultural contexts. Therefore, a top-down approach was adopted and a number of stylistic elements regarded by all project members as contributing to sensationalist reporting were identified. Coders thus do not have to assess whether news items are sensationalist in content and presentation, but simply have to code whether the respective stylistic element is present or absent, e.g. background music or slow motion picture. The same applies to topics regarded as basic need contents deemed able to attract the audience's attention. Topics such as murder, robbery, rape, accidents and disasters⁴⁷ can be presumed to be equivalent across the countries in the sample.

4.5 Qualitative comparative analysis

The overarching goal of this study is to assess how TV channels in the eleven countries just specified fare with regard to news performance depending on the extent of commercialization of the environment they operate in. The degree of commercialization is operationalized by the six economic factors mentioned above. This research design poses several challenges. First, using a sample of eleven countries expands the database well beyond two- or three-country studies, thus facilitating more solidly established

⁴⁷ Naturally, exceptional events such as the terrorist attacks on September 11th, 2001, are a disaster with far-reaching consequence and relevance. Fortunately, no such exceptional event happened during the time period in which the content analysis was carried out.

generalizations (Blumler & Gurevitch, 1995, p. 75). However, such a middle size sample – twenty-two TV channels in eleven countries – does not allow for detailed and intensive study and description of individual cases, as this kind of holistic approach is rather feasible in a qualitative, case-oriented study with a much smaller sample size. On the other hand, the number of cases to be studied is still too small for conventional statistical analysis which focuses on variable relationships and treats cases as mere observations. Obviously, a middle path should be taken in this study which aims at investigating variable relations between economic influences and news performance while at the same time providing some insights into individual cases.

Another challenge is posed by the assumption that the specified economic factors do not work independently, but interact with each other. For example, ownership structure supposedly has a different consequence on news performance depending on the relative position of public service broadcasting in the media system in question. In media systems with strong PSB channels, the notion of public service might be regarded highly even by the commercial competitors. Consequently, commercial TV channels in media systems with strong PSB channels might reach a higher news performance than those in media systems in which PSB channels' position is rather weak. With six causal factors in question, conventional statistical analysis methods such as multi-factorial analysis of variance pose a major challenge for the researcher's analytical capacity. As the factors of interest are located on different levels – TV system and TV channel – the appropriate strategy of statistical data analysis would be multi-level modelling, which in turn requires a much larger sample size than eleven cases on system level and twenty-two cases on channel level, respectively.

Moreover, it is theoretically sound to assume that news performance is not only influenced by economic factors alone, but also by numerous other potentially relevant factors, such as government intervention, the degree of professionalism of journalists, programme policies by the respective channels, or budget allocated to news programmes. Even if it is possible to identify all of these relevant factors, it is certainly next to impossible to access data on all of these factors in all eleven countries and twenty-two channels. Statistical methods such as regression analysis, however, require that all relevant exogenous variables are measured and controlled in the analysis.

To address these challenges, I will employ the method of qualitative comparative analysis (QCA)⁴⁸ as the main data analysis strategy. QCA was developed by Charles Ragin as a method for comparative research and has been constantly developed further (Ragin, 1987, 2000, 2008b; Ragin, Drass, & Davey, 2006). QCA is an analytic technique that uses set theory and Boolean algebra to make multiple comparisons of combinations of causal and outcome conditions. Although developed and used in related social sciences, QCA has not found application in media and communication research, despite obvious potential benefits for comparative media analysis (Downey & Stanyer, 2009). Given that the hierarchical data structure and sample size of this study cannot be analyzed by conventional statistical analysis, QCA offers a welcome alternative with a number of advantages.

First, QCA provides a middle path between case-oriented qualitative research and variable-oriented quantitative approaches (Ragin, 2008b) and is thus appropriate for the data base of this study. Precise measurement is maintained through quantitative assessments of degree of membership in fuzzy sets⁴⁹ which can range from a score of 0.0 (full membership) to 1.0 (full non-membership). Causal relationship between causal conditions – economic factors – and the outcome – news performance – is detected by means of analyses of set relations between sets and subsets. Case-orientation is ensured through the focus on the identity of cases and to which sets they belong.

Second, QCA enables the analysis of causal complexity, i.e. configurations of causally relevant conditions that combine in “causal recipes” to produce an outcome. Whereas in conventional statistical analysis, the interplay between different causal conditions, e.g. position of PSB channels in the respective media system and ownership structure of individual channels, has to be analyzed in complex interaction models, the set-theoretic approach of QCA provides a simple but elegant analysis of causal configurations. Causal conditions are not seen as adversaries competing with each other to explain variation in the outcome, but might work together in a recipe to produce the outcome. Configurational

⁴⁸ To be more precise, I will employ the method of fuzzy-set qualitative comparative analysis (fsQCA) which will be discussed later in more detail. For the time being, I will use the more general term of QCA which refers both to crisp-set QCA and fuzzy-set QCA.

⁴⁹ A detailed discussion of the method, its concepts and analyses is given below.

thinking is more appropriate for the overarching research question of this study, as I am not primarily interested in the net effect of individual commercial factors but in answering the question under which causal conditions – understood as combinations of economic influences – TV channels show low news performance. Another benefit of QCA for the present study is that the analysis allows for causal recipes consisting of factors on both macro level of media system and meso level of TV channels. Thus, it provides a workable solution for the hierarchical data structure without having to enlarge the data base in order to satisfy sample size requirements of multi-level modelling.

Third, QCA allows for equifinality and complex causation, i.e. when a given outcome may result from several different combinations of causal conditions. As specified above, the focus of this study is on the influence of economic factors on news performance, but this does not mean that there are no other factors affecting news performance. However, in the context of the present study, it is neither possible nor intended to investigate all potential causal conditions and their combinations that might have an impact on TV channels' performance with regard to news. These third variables are not of substantive interest but – to speak in statistical terms – explain a certain amount of the dependent variable's variance. In conventional quantitative research, this neglect of third variables, i.e. a misspecification of the model, will certainly lead to under- or overestimation of variable relationships. Therefore, in order to estimate the net effect of the substantive independent variable, the impact of competing causal conditions has to be controlled by subtracting from the estimate of each independent variable's effect any explained variation in the dependent variable it shares with other causal variables (variance partitioning).

Transferring this argument to the present study, this means that it is only possible to compare news performance of TV channels with high degree of commercialization with TV channels with a low degree of commercialization if all other factors are held constant. Otherwise, one would find only a weak correlation between commercialization and news performance, as there might be TV channels that are not commercialized but still have a low news performance. In these cases, there are probably causal conditions other than economic factors that lead to a weak news performance. In QCA, these cases would not undermine the causal argument because they are not directly relevant for the analysis. The goal of this study is not to explain all instances with a low news performance but to investigate whether

a high degree of commercialization leads to a low news performance and whether TV channels operating in an environment with a low degree of commercialization fare better than TV channels in highly commercialized television systems.

4.5.1 How does QCA work?

Having established the advantages QCA offers for the present study, I will now provide a more detailed description of the method and its basic concepts.⁵⁰ This discussion is not intended as a how-to-do-it guide, as this is readily available in manuals and textbooks on QCA. It is rather a rough sketch to enable researchers unfamiliar with the method to follow the data collection (calibration of set membership), data analysis and interpretation of the results.

In very general terms, QCA is based on set theory and Boolean algebra and aims at multiple comparisons of combinations of causal and outcome conditions.⁵¹ The goal of the technique is to aid causal interpretation using knowledge of cases. QCA is a useful tool to explore empirical evidence descriptively with focus on causal configurations, i.e. how causal conditions may combine to produce a certain outcome. The principles of set theory and Boolean algebra are applied to establish explicit connections between causal conditions or combinations of causal conditions and the outcome. There are two different strategies to establish explicit connections: the first strategy aims at the assessment of necessary conditions, i.e. to examine cases with the same outcome (e.g. low news performance) and attempt to identify causal conditions shared by these cases (e.g. commercial ownership and market orientation). The second strategy starts with the examination of cases sharing the same causal conditions or combinations of causal conditions and assess whether these cases also share the outcome (e.g. do TV-channels with commercial ownership and a high degree of market orientation all have a low news performance?). This second strategy is concerned with identifying sufficient conditions. Necessary causes have to be present for an outcome

⁵⁰ The following discussion is based on various textbooks and manuals on QCA (Ragin, 2008b; Ragin, Strand, & Rubinson, 2008; Schneider & Wagemann, 2007). The software and manual are available at <http://www.u.arizona.edu/~cragin/fsQCA/index.shtml>

⁵¹ In the parlance of QCA, the terms „causal conditions“ and “outcome“ denote independent and dependent variables in conventional quantitative research.

to occur, but do not always lead to the outcome. In contrast, sufficient causes always produce the outcome when present. In this study, I aim to assess whether TV channels operating in an environment highly influenced by economic factors (causal conditions) all display a low news performance (outcome). In the language of QCA, the strategy of this study is to identify sufficient, but not necessary causes for low news performance.⁵² Sufficient but not necessary causes produce the outcome but are not the only causes with this property. As discussed above, there might well be other “causal recipes” leading to a low news performance.

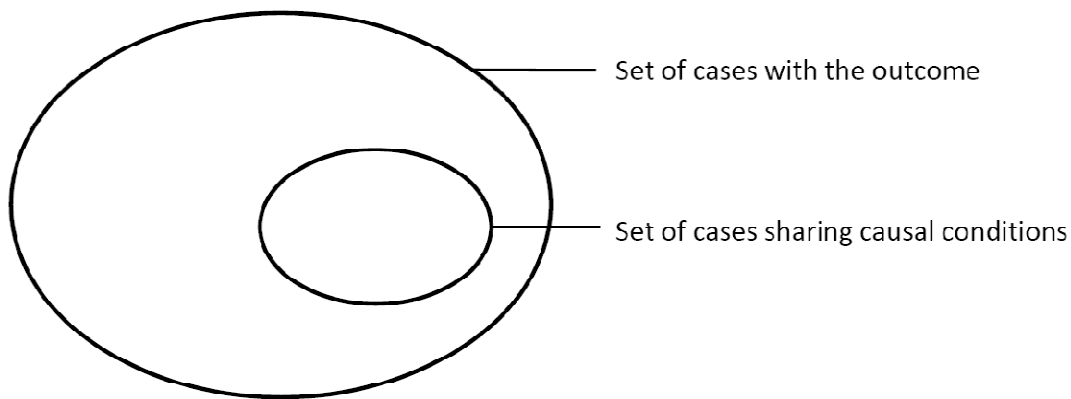
4.5.2 Assessment of sufficient causes

In terms of set theory, the assessment of whether causal conditions or combinations of causal conditions constitute a sufficient condition for the outcome involves an examination of whether cases sharing relevant causal conditions (TV channels influenced by economic factors) are a subset of cases with the outcome (TV channels with low news performance). This can be best illustrated using an example: Figure 4 shows a Venn diagram illustrating a sufficient but not necessary cause. The larger set represents the set of cases with the outcome (TV channels with low news performance). If the combination of “commercial ownership”, “strong market orientation” and the absence of “strong PSB channels in the market”⁵³ is assumed to be a sufficient condition of low news performance, then the set of TV channels with this combination of three causal conditions can be represented by the smaller set that is situated within the larger set. The Venn diagram illustrates the explicit connection of sufficient cause: Whenever the combination of “commercial ownership”, “strong market orientation” and no “strong PSB channels in the market” is present, then the outcome “low news performance” is also present. However, the smaller set does not cover the whole of the larger set, hence indicating there are other combinations of conditions that are sufficient but not necessary causes for the outcome.

⁵² For this reason, further discussion of QCA will not deal with analysis of necessary conditions.

⁵³ It is of course possible to formulate this condition as „weak PSB channels in the market“. I will however use this positive formulation of this condition to illustrate that the absence of a causal condition can also be part of a causal combination (see below).

Figure 4: Venn diagram illustrating sufficient but not necessary conditions



Source: Ragin (2008b, p. 19)

4.5.3 Truth table in crisp set QCA

Causal complexity (or “equifinality”) can be analyzed using the truth table, a key tool that allows structured, focused comparisons. The truth table lists all logically possible combinations of the causal conditions and the empirical outcome associated with each combination. In the following, I will use the same example as above to illustrate how a truth table is constructed and how it can be used to identify relevant causal conditions. The three causal conditions are again “commercial ownership”, “strong market orientation” and “strong PSB channels in the market”, and the outcome “low news performance”. Table 5 shows a hypothetical data matrix with twelve TV channels (cases) and their membership in the four sets. The cases are either in the set and take the value “1” or out of the set and take the value “0”. This kind of sets is called crisp set and at this point, I will present only crisp set QCA because it is easier to illustrate basic concepts of QCA using crisp sets.

The information in the hypothetical data matrix is now used to construct the truth table. In a truth table, a row is not a case but a logically possible combination of all causal conditions. The number of possible combinations is 2^k where k is the number of causal conditions. In this example with three causal conditions, there are $2^3=8$ possible combinations of causal conditions and thus eight rows in the truth table. Table 6 shows the truth table constructed from the hypothetical data matrix in Table 5. Each row in the truth table corresponds to one of the eight possible combinations, e.g. the first row represents cases with all three causal conditions present; the second row represents cases with two causal conditions present and one causal condition absent and so on. For each row, it is established whether there are

cases displaying the respective causal combination and whether this causal combination is associated with the presence or absence of the outcome.

Table 5: Hypothetical data matrix

Channel	Commercial ownership	Strong market orientation	Strong PSB in the market	Low news performance
1	1	1	0	1
2	1	1	0	1
3	1	1	0	1
4	1	1	0	1
5	1	0	0	1
6	1	0	0	1
7	1	0	1	0
8	1	0	1	0
9	0	1	0	1
10	0	0	1	0
11	0	0	1	0
12	0	0	1	0

The data matrix shows that there is no case with all three causal conditions present; therefore, it cannot be decided whether this combination is associated with the presence or absence of the outcome.⁵⁴ This situation is denoted with a “-” entry in the column for the outcome in the truth table. For the second row in the truth table (two conditions present and one condition absent), there are four instances in the data matrix (channels one to four) and all display the outcome. Thus, the outcome column in this row is coded “1” (=present) and the number of cases is four.⁵⁵ The same analysis is then conducted for the remaining rows in the truth table.

⁵⁴ In the parlance of QCA, these “remainders” indicate limited diversity; their existence requires counterfactual analysis which will be explained in more detail below.

⁵⁵ The number of cases in each row is not necessary for the solutions of the truth table and will only be needed to calculate consistency and coverage of the solutions (see below). At this point, it should only illustrate that the presence/absence of the outcome is coded with “1” and “0” and not by the number of cases displaying this specific combination.

Table 6: Hypothetical truth table showing causal conditions leading to low news performance

Row	Causal conditions			Outcome Low news performance	Number of cases
	Commercial ownership	Strong market orientation	Strong PSB in the market		
1	1	1	1	-	0
2	1	1	0	1	4
3	1	0	1	0	2
4	1	0	0	1	2
5	0	1	1	-	0
6	0	1	0	1	1
7	0	0	1	0	3
8	0	0	0	-	0

The hypothetical truth table indicates that there are three combinations associated with the outcome: 1) TV channels with commercial ownership and a strong market orientation NOT operating in a market with strong PSB channels (row 2); 2) TV channels with commercial ownership without a strong market orientation and NOT operating in a market with strong PSB channels (row 4) and 3) TV channels without commercial ownership but with a strong market orientation but NOT operating in a market with strong PSB channels (row 6). This solution can be presented in the following Boolean equation in which “•” denotes the connection AND, “+” denotes the connection OR, and “~” denote the absence of the respective causal condition.⁵⁶

$$\begin{aligned}
 \text{Low news performance} \leq & \text{commercial ownership} \bullet \text{strong market orientation} \bullet \sim \text{strong PSB} \\
 & + \text{commercial ownership} \bullet \sim \text{strong market orientation} \bullet \sim \text{strong PSB} \\
 & + \sim \text{commercial ownership} \bullet \text{strong market orientation} \bullet \sim \text{strong PSB}
 \end{aligned}$$

The QCA truth table algorithm follows a process of simplification. The minimization rule for Boolean expressions specifies that if the two causal recipes differ by only one causal condition yet produce the same outcome, then this causal condition is considered irrelevant and can be removed to create a simpler, combined expression. In the present example, the first two recipes differ only in “strong market orientation” which is present in one expression

⁵⁶ For a explanation of Boolean algebra, confer Ragin et al. (2008) or Schneider and Wagemann (2007).

and absent in the other. Hence, the solution can be minimized to *commercial ownership* • *~strong PSB* – indicating that TV channels with commercial ownership and operating in a market without strong PSB channels all show low news performance regardless of their degree of market orientation. Likewise, the first and the third expressions can be simplified to *strong market orientation* • *~strong PSB* because they differ only by “commercial ownership” which is present in one recipe and absent in the other. The minimized solution for the truth table is thus:

Low news performance \leq *commercial ownership* • *~strong PSB*

+ *strong market orientation* • *~strong PSB*

In this hypothetical example, there are thus two causal recipes (combinations of causal conditions) leading to the outcome: TV channels with commercial ownership operating in a market without strong PSB channels or TV channels with a strong market orientation operating in a market without strong PSB channels have low news performance. In line with QCA’s allowance for causal complexity, there are two alternative paths leading to the outcome. TV channels with low news performance that can be explained by the first causal recipe are channels 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6; the other causal path covers channels 1, 2, 3, 4, and 9 (see Table 5). The first four cases are covered by both causal paths.

4.5.4 Consistency and coverage in crisp sets

Having established the two causal recipes producing the outcome of interest, the next step involves the evaluation of the empirical support for these two arguments, using the descriptive measures of consistency and coverage. Consistency of a causal recipe indicates how closely a perfect subset relation is approximated, i.e. how consistently cases with this causal recipe display the outcome. In the hypothetical example above, both identified causal recipes have a perfect consistency of 1, as all cases with these causal recipes also show the outcome.⁵⁷ For purposes of illustration, let us assume that commercial ownership alone has been identified as a sufficient cause for low news performance. In this case, the consistency of the argument “cases with commercial ownership are a subset of cases with low news performance” is only 0.75: there are eight channels with the causal condition “commercial

⁵⁷ This situation of perfectly consistent set relations is relatively rare in social research.

ownership” (row 2, 3, and 4 in the truth table, see Table 6) but only six channels of these also display the outcome (row 2 and 3).⁵⁸ Thus, the argument of set-theoretic relation is consistent with the empirical data to only 75 per cent. Consistency scores should be as close to one (perfect consistency) as possible. Scores below .75 indicate substantial inconsistency; causal recipes with scores below this cut-off threshold should not be taken into further consideration (Ragin, 2008b). Consistency is comparable to significance in statistical analyses: if a hypothesized subset relation is not consistent, then it is not supported by the empirical evidence.⁵⁹

Coverage gauges the degree to which a combination of causal conditions “accounts for” instances of the outcome and is thus an indicator of empirical relevance. This can be illustrated by the Venn diagram in Figure 4: The larger the size of the inner set (the causal condition) in relation to the size of the outer set (the outcome), the more instances of the outcome are covered by this causal condition. If the set of the causal condition covers the set of the outcome completely, then coverage is maximal and there is no other causal path leading to the outcome. In the present example, the raw coverage of the causal recipe *commercial ownership* • *~strong PSB* is .86 because it covers six out of seven instances with the outcome (channels 1 to 6). Raw coverage of the causal recipe *strong market orientation* • *~strong PSB* is .71 because it covers five out of seven instances with the outcome⁶⁰ (channels 1 to 4 and channel 9). Raw coverage refers to the proportion of memberships in the outcome explained by each causal recipe by itself, i.e. if no other causal recipe is taken into consideration.

When there are several causal paths leading to the outcome, it is also possible to calculate the unique coverage of each causal recipe. Unique coverage refers to the proportion of instances covered by one path uniquely, i.e. not covered by any other path. The first causal path in the present example has a unique coverage of .29 and the second path a unique

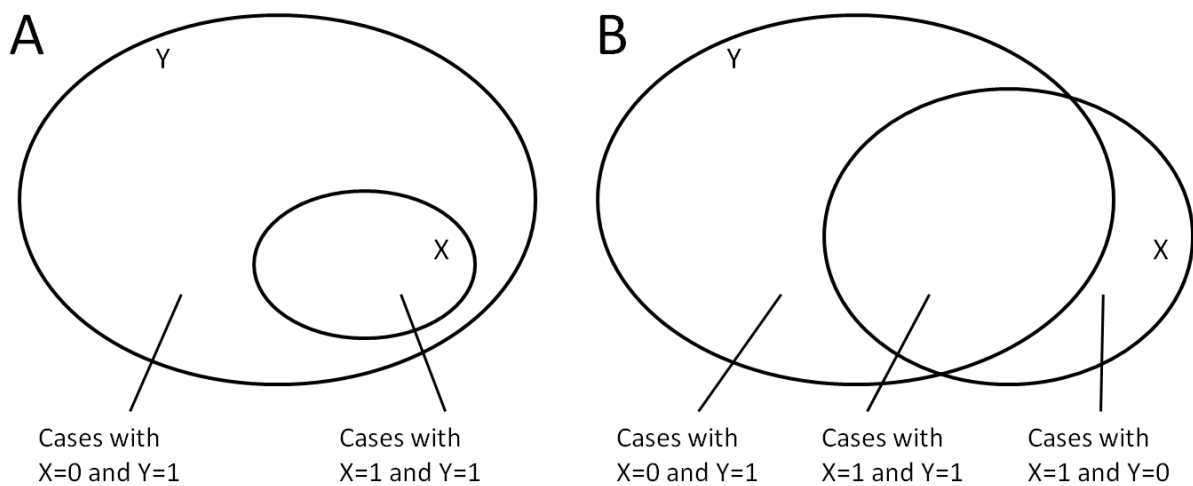
⁵⁸ Consistency of sufficient causes in crisp sets is calculated as the number of cases displaying both the causal condition and the outcome divided by the number of cases displaying the causal condition.

⁵⁹ However, consistencies and coverage are nevertheless descriptive measures and not of probabilistic nature.

⁶⁰ Raw coverage of sufficient causes in crisp sets is calculated as the number of cases displaying both the causal condition and the outcome divided by the number of cases displaying the outcome.

coverage of .14.⁶¹ The scores in unique coverage are both much lower than the raw coverage scores because the two causal paths in the example overlap to a high degree, as channels 1 to 4 are covered by both paths. The partitioning of total coverage in raw and unique coverage of alternate causal combinations is analogous to the partitioning of explained variance in multiple regressions. Coverage scores are indicators of empirical relevance, a causal combination that covers only a small proportion of the instances of the outcome is not as empirically as important as one that covers a large proportion. If consistency is comparable to statistical significance, coverage is comparable to the strength of the relationship.

Figure 5: Venn diagrams illustrating consistency and coverage in crisp sets



There is sometimes a trade-off between consistency and coverage as quality criteria for causal recipes. Causal recipes that are very narrowly formulated can achieve very high consistency but low coverage, because these very specific combinations of many conditions apply to only very few cases. Conversely, causal recipes consisting of only few causal conditions may apply to many cases, thus achieving a high coverage but low consistency. Figure 5 shows two Venn diagrams illustrating this trade-off with X denoting the set of cases sharing the causal conditions and Y denoting the set of cases displaying the outcome. The

⁶¹ Unique coverage of one causal recipe is calculated by subtracting from the total coverage the raw coverage of all other recipes. In this example, total coverage is 1 (all instances of the outcome are explained by at least one recipe).

size of the oval indicates the number of cases in the set. In figure 5A, all cases with the causal conditions present also display the outcome (cases with $X=1$ and $Y=1$), resulting in a perfect consistency of this causal combination. However, the small size of the oval indicates a small coverage, as there are a number of cases with the outcome that are not explained by this causal recipe (cases with $X=0$ and $Y=1$). In figure 5B, the set of cases with the causal conditions is not completely inside the set of cases with the outcome, indicating a non-perfect consistency (cases with $X=1$ and $Y=0$). However, the overlap between both sets is larger than in plot 3A, meaning that the coverage of the causal recipe in 3B is higher (cases with $X=1$ and $Y=1$), but it does not explain all instances of the outcome, either (cases with $X=0$ and $Y=1$). It goes without saying that coverage scores should only be calculated for consistent set relations. In analogy to conventional statistical analysis, it is reasonable only to discuss the magnitude of regression or correlation coefficients that are statistically significant.

4.5.5 Fuzzy sets

The discussed basic concepts of QCA have been presented in the context of crisp set QCA because crisp sets are more intuitive to grasp. However, many concepts of interest to social scientists are not simple dichotomies but vary by level or degree. The presence/absence distinction of crisp sets is too crude for concepts which can be measured on an interval- or even ratio-scale. Market competition for example is not merely present or absent, but competition can be fierce or moderate. In set-theoretic terms, TV channels facing moderate market competition are neither fully in nor fully out of the set of TV channels operating on a strongly competitive market. This kind of partial membership is not possible in crisp set, but in so-called fuzzy sets. The application of QCA to fuzzy sets is therefore called fuzzy set QCA (fsQCA).

Fuzzy membership scores denote the varying degree to which cases belong to a set with 1 and 0 indicating full membership and full non-membership, respectively, and values between 1 and 0 indicating partial membership. Therefore, fuzzy sets are both qualitative and quantitative: Full membership, full non-membership and the point of maximum ambiguity (membership score = 0.5) are qualitative states, whereas varying degrees of membership allow for precise measurement and maintaining fine-grained variation across

cases. It is up to the researcher to define how fine-grained fuzzy set membership scores can be. A six-value fuzzy set for example uses the following six values: 1 = fully in; 0.8 = mostly but not fully in; 0.6 = more or less in; 0.4 = more or less out; 0.2 = mostly but not fully out and 0 = fully out. In a six-value fuzzy set, TV-channels facing moderate market competition thus can be assigned a membership score of 0.6 in the set. A simpler scheme uses four values: 1 = fully in; 0.7 = more in than out; 0.3 = more out than in and 0 = fully out.

To calibrate membership in a set, i.e. to determine membership scores by converting cases' values on a metric variable to membership scores in a fuzzy set requires substantive knowledge on the part of the researcher. Ideally, set membership should be calibrated according to "external standards" which can be provided by collective knowledge base of social scientists. Take the example of the Human Development Index developed by the United Nations Development Programme (2009): a HDI-score of higher than 0.9 indicates very high human development, values between 0.9 and 0.8 indicate high human development, values between 0.7 and 0.5 indicate medium human development and so on. Using these benchmarks, it is possible to calibrate membership of each country in the set of countries with "high human development". Unfortunately, such benchmarks are almost nonexistent in media and communication research. Therefore, the researcher has to determine set membership based on his or her theoretical and substantive knowledge and subjective assessment (Ragin, 2008a). This process is of course fundamentally interpretive and hence, decisions have to be made transparent.

In fuzzy sets, membership scores in an intersection of different sets (logical and) are determined by the "weakest link"-principle. A TV channel with a membership score of 0.7 in the set of channels with "commercial ownership" and 0.3 in the set of channels with "strong market orientation" is assigned a score of 0.3 in the set of TV channels with both "commercial ownership" and "strong market orientation". The membership score in the union of two or more sets (logical or) is determined by the highest score. Thus, the TV channel in this example is assigned a score of 0.7 in the set of channels with "commercial ownership" or "strong market orientation". Based on these principles of fuzzy set theory, it is also possible to determine subset relations, as these indicate the presence of a sufficient but not necessary cause. In fuzzy sets, a subset relation is established when membership scores in one set are consistently equal to or less than membership scores in another set. In

other words, when membership scores in the set representing a combination of causal conditions are consistently equal to or less than membership scores in the set representing the outcome, then this combination of conditions is sufficient for the outcome.

4.5.6 Truth table in fuzzy set QCA

In fsQCA, it is also possible to make use of the truth table to determine relevant causal combinations leading to the outcome of interest. In crisp set truth tables, each row represents one logically possible combination of causal conditions. In the case of fuzzy sets, the causal conditions define a vector space in which the corners correspond directly to the rows in a crisp set truth table. A multidimensional vector space constructed from fuzzy sets has 2^k corners, similar to the 2^k rows in a crisp set truth table (with k being the number of causal conditions). The corners represent “ideal type” of causal combinations because each causal condition has either the value “0” or “1” in the corners. It is possible to translate fuzzy set analyses to crisp truth tables, with each row of the table indicating a combination of causal conditions as represented in the corners of the vector space. In contrast to crisp set where cases are either in or out of the set, cases in fuzzy sets has varying degree of membership in the different corners of the vector space. However, due to a property of the combinations of fuzzy sets,⁶² each case can have only a membership score greater than 0.5 (i.e. more in that out of the set) in one corner of the vector space out of all possible combinations. Thus, it is always possible to identify for each case the corner of the vector space (=logically possible causal combination) in which this case has a membership score greater than 0.5. Due to limited diversity, there will always be combinations without a single case with membership score greater than 0.5; these combinations will be treated as “remainders” in subsequent analyses. Combinations with an appropriate number of cases, i.e. empirically relevant combinations, are then assessed with regard to fuzzy subset relation with the outcome. Remember that the goal of the analysis is to determine whether a combination of causal conditions is a sufficient cause for the outcome (= is a subset of the outcome).

⁶² Confer Ragin (2008a) and Schneider & Wagemann (2007).

In fsQCA, the fuzzy set analysis of the negation of the outcome (in this study high news performance) has to be conducted separately from the analysis of the outcome (low news performance). As fuzzy sets allow for an asymmetry between results of the two analyses (Ragin, 2008a), causal combinations leading to the negation of the outcome are not necessarily the negation of causal combinations leading to the outcome. In other words, two QCAs have to be conducted to identify (combinations of) economic influences sufficient for low news performance and high news performance, respectively.

4.5.7 Consistency and coverage in fuzzy sets

Consistency measures the degree to which a hypothesized subset relationship is supported by the empirical evidence. For example, if the membership scores of all TV channels in the set of channels with “commercial ownership” and “strong market orientation” are consistently equal to or less than these channels’ membership in the set of channels with “low news performance”, then a perfect subset relationship is indicated. Naturally, as already stated above, perfectly consistent set relations are rare in social sciences so that it is important to assess the degree to which the empirical evidence is consistent with the hypothesized set theoretic relation. Under a certain “cut-off” threshold (usually 0.75 or higher), the relationship is considered as too inconsistent to be taken into account (see above).

Consistency in fuzzy sets is determined by the following formula suggested by Ragin (2008b, p. 52):

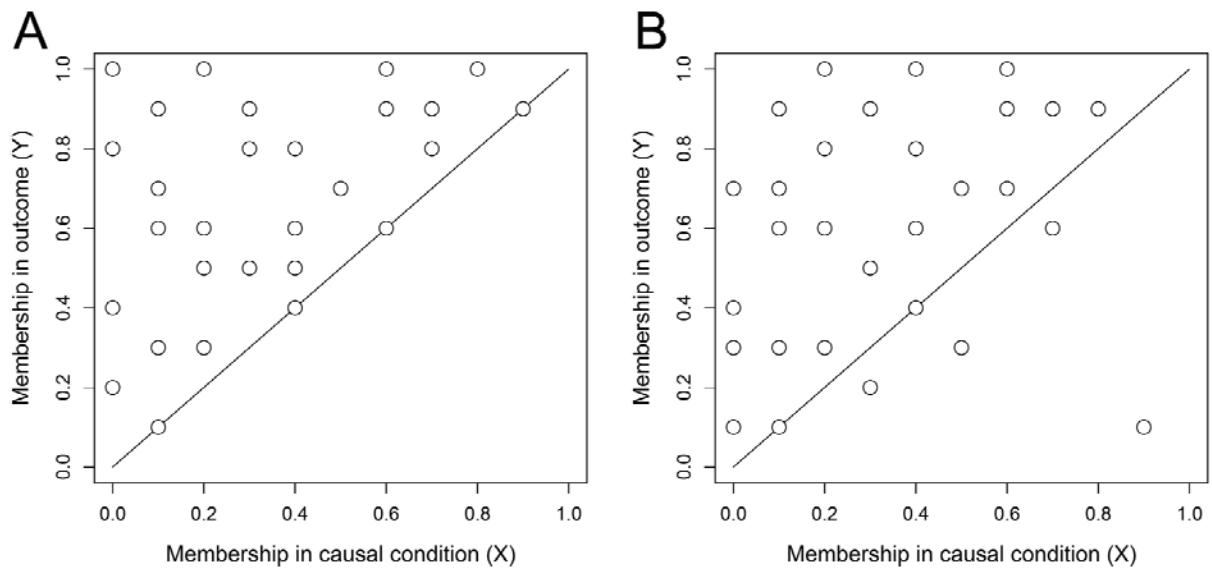
$$\text{Consistency } (X_i \leq Y_i) = \sum (\min(X_i, Y_i)) / \sum (X_i)$$

X_i indicates membership score of case i in the causal condition, Y_i membership in the outcome and $\min(X_i, Y_i)$ indicates the selection of the lower of the two values. This measure of consistency takes the value of 1 in case of perfect subset relationship as specified above. It prescribes large penalties for large inconsistencies (e.g. $X_i = 0.8$ and $Y_i = 0.2$) but small penalties for “near misses” (e.g. $X_i = 0.8$ and $Y_i = 0.7$).⁶³ Figure 6 illustrates how this consistency measure works.

⁶³ For a more detailed explanation of this property of the formula, confer Ragin (2008b) and Schneider & Wagemann (2007).

When the causal condition (X) is a perfectly consistent subset of the outcome (Y), then all X_i values are less than or equal to their corresponding Y_i values so that all cases are in the upper triangle in figure 6A. In figure 6B, there are a few cases below but close to the diagonal and one case with high membership in the causal condition but very low membership in the outcome. This large inconsistency will be penalized and lead to a lower consistency value, whereas cases with small inconsistency contribute less to the reduction of the consistency value.

Figure 6: Fuzzy set relation illustrating consistency in sufficient causes



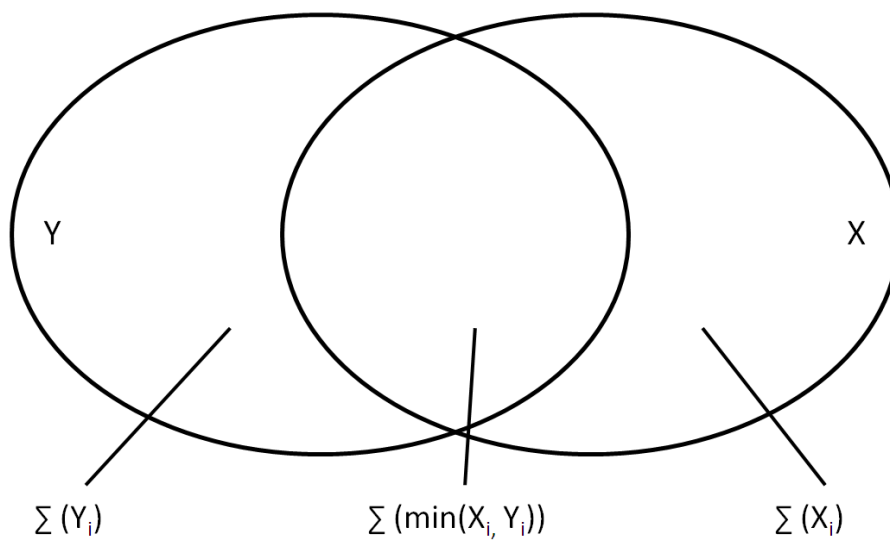
Coverage is a measure for the empirical relevance of a causal combination that has been established as a consistent sufficient cause for the outcome. In crisp sets, coverage can be visualized as the overlap of the two sets relative to the size of the larger set (representing the outcome, see Figure 4). In fuzzy set, this overlap is given by the intersection of the two sets and calculated in the same way as the numerator in the formula for consistency: $\sum (\min(X_i, Y_i))$. The size of the larger set is given directly by the sum of the membership scores in the outcome: $\sum (Y_i)$. Thus, the measure of fuzzy-set coverage is simply the overlap expressed as a proportion of the sum of the membership scores in the outcome (Ragin, 2008b, p. 57):

$$\text{Coverage } (X_i \leq Y_i) = \sum (\min(X_i, Y_i)) / \sum (Y_i)$$

As for crisp sets, it is also possible to illustrate consistency and coverage in fuzzy sets. Figure 7 shows such a Venn diagram with X denoting a set of cases with the causal conditions and Y

denoting cases with the outcome. In contrast to crisp sets, the size of the ovals representing the two sets does not indicate number of cases, but the sums of membership scores. The overlap of the two ovals represents the numerator in both formulas, namely the sum of the smaller of both values ($\sum (\min(X_i, Y_i))$). The larger the overlap in relation to the sums of membership scores in the causal conditions ($\sum (X_i)$), the higher the consistency score. Likewise, the larger the overlap in relation to the sums of membership scores in the outcome ($\sum (Y_i)$), the higher the coverage score.

Figure 7: Venn diagrams illustrating consistency and coverage in fuzzy sets



4.5.8 Limited diversity and counterfactual analysis

Limited diversity characterizes the situation in which combinations of causal conditions do not have any empirical instances (these combinations are called "remainders"). This situation is very common in non-experimental social research for several reasons. First, some causal conditions are more likely to combine with each other than others and some combinations do not exist in reality at all.⁶⁴ Second, as the number of logically possible combinations grows exponentially with the number of conditions (2^k), even a limited

⁶⁴ For example, there is no free-to-air commercial TV channel that does not have advertising as a source of revenue.

number of conditions can result in a fairly large number of possible combinations so that not all of these combinations can be filled with cases.⁶⁵

Counterfactual reasoning involving these remainders is encouraged in fsQCA in order to achieve greater parsimony with regard to the solutions for the truth table. Counterfactual analysis means that the researcher makes assumption about the plausibility of the remainders yielding a certain outcome and uses this assumption to simplify the solutions found for cases with empirical instances. These solutions can be under circumstances fairly complex⁶⁶ and thus achieve only a modest coverage, i.e. empirical relevance. One alternate strategy is to treat all remainders as potential simplifying assumptions. A remainder is thus regarded as leading to the outcome if doing so results in a simpler solution. Likewise, it can also be regarded as leading to the absence of the outcome if doing so helps finding a simpler solution for the absence of the outcome. Permitting all remainders helps finding the most parsimonious solution, but some remainders might be “difficult” counterfactuals in the sense that they are implausible or contradictory in light of existing knowledge. Another strategy is to permit only “easy” counterfactuals, i.e. remainders that are more plausible and fit in with existing theoretical knowledge. This strategy leads to “intermediate solutions” which are simpler than the complex solutions because the researcher can remove causal conditions from the complex solution that are inconsistent with existing knowledge. On the other hand, the intermediate solutions contain the causal conditions specified in the most parsimonious solution. Ragin recommends the use of intermediate solutions because they are neither as intricate as complex solutions nor as unrealistically simple as the most parsimonious solution and thus most interpretable.⁶⁷

In this short presentation of QCA, the most important concepts of the method have been introduced: set-theoretic relations, sufficiency and necessity, crisp sets and fuzzy sets, truth table, consistency and coverage, and counterfactual analysis. This short discussion aims at familiarizing the reader with the logic, basic concepts, terminology, and analysis strategy of

⁶⁵ A large sample does not guarantee that all combinations can be assigned with cases as cases can be concentrated in certain combinations and are not at all present in others.

⁶⁶ This is why in fsQCA, they are called „complex solutions“.

⁶⁷ Chapter 5.1 provides more detailed explanations and illustrations of the concept of counterfactual reasoning.

the method. Before I present the study's results obtained by fsQCA, I will first describe the calibration of fuzzy set membership of the six economic influences determined as the causal conditions in the QCA.⁶⁸ The method of QCA has barely been employed in media and communication research so that there are no benchmarks giving orientation.⁶⁹ Therefore, I will determine set membership based on my theoretical knowledge and subjective assessment.

4.5.9 Fuzzy set membership of economic influences as causal conditions

The three economic influences on the macro level are the degree of market competition, the extent to which the entire television system is financed by advertising, and the relative position of public service broadcasting in the respective country. For each of these influences, I will determine the membership score of each of the eleven countries in the sample in the sets of countries with "strong market competition", "strong ad-dependency" and "weak PSB position".

The degree of market competition is operationalized by three measures: number of competing newscasts, newspaper circulation and Internet penetration (cf. Chapter 4.3). To determine membership in the set "strong market competition", I draw on data on all three indicators with the number of competing newscasts in the same market being the most important measure. First, membership score is determined for each indicator: countries with less than two million potential viewers for each newscast are considered full-member, countries with more than eight million potential viewers for each newscast are considered full non-members, and the cross-over point set at five million potential viewers per newscast. With regard to newspaper circulation, full membership is set at more than 300 copies per thousand adults, full non-membership at less than fifty copies and the cross-over point set at 175 copies. Countries with an Internet penetration rate among adults of more than 75% are considered full members; full non-members if the penetration rate is lower than 25% with the cross-over point set at 50%. For each country, a weighted mean is then

⁶⁸ Fuzzy set membership of the different aspects of news performance will be presented later in Chapter 5.

⁶⁹ An exception is the study by Downey and Stanyer (2009) which however is rather intended as a demonstration of the benefits of fsQCA for comparative media analysis and not as a substantive contribution.

calculated across all three values of membership with the number of competing newscasts weighted by factor three, as direct competition with comparable newscasts can be regarded as the most important factor. For example, evening newscasts in Germany have a potential large audience size of approximately twelve million viewers per newscast (membership score: 0), a high newspaper circulation of 299 copies per thousand adults (membership score: 1) and an Internet penetration rate of 60% (membership score: 0.7). The weighted mean of these three scores is 0.43, leading to a final membership score of 0.3 in the set of “strong market competition”.

For Belgium and Canada, only the Flemish and English speaking population are considered because there are only Flemish and English language newscasts in the sample which assumedly do not compete directly for the French speaking audience in these two countries. For Switzerland, the two newscasts in the sample are the two flagship news bulletins of the German and French language public channels which in effect compete on different markets. However, these two markets are comparable concerning the strength of competition, as both newscasts are directed to a small population and face competition from broadcasters from Germany and France, respectively. On the other hand, both newscasts have a monopoly over the national news market in their respective language region, so that it would not be appropriate to assign both newscasts full membership in the set “strong market competition”. Therefore, a membership score of 0.7 is assigned to both newscasts. The USA is a special case because national newscasts have to compete not only with cable news but also with local news for which the news markets are as large as the markets in the other countries. Therefore, the USA is assigned a membership score of 0.7 (instead of 0.3 as calculated).

Membership score of the set “strong ad-dependency” of the whole television system is determined as follows: Countries in which television draws more than 50% of the total amount of adspend for media are considered full members; countries with less than 10% of the total adspend for TV are considered full non-members, with the cross-over point set at 30%. In the cases of Taiwan and USA, I also consider the amount of total adspend for media as percentage of the gross domestic product. In Taiwan, the total adspend constitutes only 0.4% of the GDP, indicating that TV channels do not have access to large amounts of advertising money. Thus, Taiwan’s membership score is lowered to 0.7. In the USA, the total

adspend for media constitutes 1.2% of the GDP so that very large amounts of financial resources are available to mass media in general and for television in particular. Therefore, the USA is accorded full membership in the set although television's share of the total ad spend is only 38%.

To determine membership in the set "weak public service broadcasting", I draw data from a variety of publicly accessible sources and information provided by members of the Foreign News on TV project. Countries in which all public service channels have a share in the audience market of 10% or less are considered full members. Full non-membership is coded when all PSB channels have a total share of 35% or more, and the cross-over point is set at 25%. There is a clear pattern observable: all European countries are either full non-members or more out than in the set of countries with weak public service broadcasting, whereas all non-European countries are either full members or more in the set than out. Table 7 shows membership scores for all three sets of economic influences on system level.

Table 7: Fuzzy set membership of economic influences on system level

Country	Membership of „strong competition"	Membership of "Strong ad-dependency" (TV system)	Membership of "weak PSB"
Belgium	1	0.7	0
Canada	0.7	0.7	1
Chile	0.7	1	0.7
Germany	0.3	0.3	0
Israel	1	0.7	1
Italy	0.3	1	0
Poland	0	1	0
Portugal	0.7	1	0.3
Switzerland	0.7	0.3	0.3
Taiwan	1	0.7	1
USA	0.7	1	1

The three economic influences on the level of TV channels to be included as causal conditions are ownership structure, the extent to which PSB channels derive revenues from advertising, and the frequency of market research on news audience. Ownership structure is not operationalized as a simple dichotomy between public and commercial ownership, but as an ordinal scaled variable with public service channels and commercial channels whose shares are traded on the stock market marking the two endpoints. TV channels belonging to publicly traded conglomerates are considered to be strongly affected by short-term profit goals as compared to independent channels or public service channels. Hence, full membership in the set of TV channels with “commercial ownership” is assigned to TV channels that are part of a group whose shares are publicly traded; unlisted group-owned channels are also considered more in the set than out, but are not full members; full non-membership is assigned to public service channels. The Israeli channel Arutz2 is considered more out of the set than in because although it is a commercial channel, half of the members of its board of directors are members of the publicly regulated Second Authority for Television and Radio.

The extent to which TV channels depend on advertising as a source of revenue is operationalized simply by the share of revenue that is derived from advertising. TV channels for which advertising constitutes more than three quarters of total revenue are considered full members of the set “strong ad-dependency”, this applies to all private TV channels in the sample. With regard to the twelve public service channels in the sample, full non-membership is coded when there is no revenue derived from advertising at all and the cross-over point is set at 25%. With respect to market research activities, TV channels which conduct market research on news audience several times a year are assigned full membership in the set “high market research activity”; TV channels not doing any market research are assigned full non-membership. TV channels which conduct market research on news audience less frequently than once a year are considered more out than in the set, whereas TV channel doing market research once a year are considered more in than out. Table 8 shows membership scores for all three sets of economic influences on the level of TV channels.

Table 8: Fuzzy set membership of economic influences on TV channel level

TV-Channel	Membership of „commercial ownership"	Membership of „strong ad-dependency" (TV channel)	Membership of „high market research activity"
BEL_VRT	0	0.3	1
BEL_VTM	0.7	1	1
CDN_CBC	0	0.7	1
CDN_CTV	1	1	1
CHI_TVN	0	1	1
CHI_Mega	0.7	1	1
GER_ARD	0	0.3	0.7
GER_RTL	1	1	1
ISR_IBA	0	0	1
ISR_Arutz2	0.3	1	0.7
ITA_RAI1	0	0.7	1
ITA_Canal5	1	1	1
POL_TVP1	0	0.7	1
POL_TVN	1	1	1
POR_RTP	0	0.7	1
POR_TVI	1	1	1
SUI_SF	0	0.3	1
SUI_TSR	0	0.3	1
TPE_PTS	0	0	0.3
TPE_TVBS	0.7	1	0.3
USA_PBS	0	0	1
USA_NBC	1	1	1

In order to conduct fsQCA, the membership scores for all six economic influences on system and TV channel level are combined in one single data matrix with the twenty-two TV channels in the sample as rows and the fuzzy sets of economic influences as columns. The membership score of economic influences on system level is naturally the same for the two respective TV channels from each country. These factors indicate the degree of commercialization of the market environment these channels operate in whereas factors on channel level stand for commercial pressures coming from these channel's ownership, revenue structure, and degree of market-orientation.

5 Results

5.1 Economic influences on topic coverage in TV news

Research questions 1a to 1d ask which TV channel characteristics and which market environment lead to a high amount of airtime devoted to topics that are socially relevant but less attractive to large audiences and which channel characteristics and market environment are conducive to a high coverage of topics of less social relevance but attractive to large audiences. Table 9 shows the amount of airtime devoted to the ten main topic categories for all twenty-two TV channels in the sample. I will first point out some interesting patterns in the findings before analyzing the coverage of topic categories of high social relevance (politics and economy) and of those categories of low social relevance (crime and violence, fashion and human interest as well as accidents and disasters) in more detail below.

Across the board, internal politics, international politics, and military and defence issues are assigned the greatest importance in news coverage, corroborating results from previous studies (Curran et al., 2009; Rössler, 2004; Wilke, 2008). Among TV channels that devote the highest amount of airtime to these topics are both U.S. channels and the public service channel in Israel, Italy, Germany and Poland (38% to 46%). The U.S. presidential primaries and the Italian cabinet crisis as well as the Italian snap general elections held in April 2008 might explain in parts this high level of attention to politics on channels in these countries. However, the Italian commercial channel Canale5 devotes significantly less airtime to the coverage of politics, thus indicating the operation of other causal factors than current political events. On Taiwan, there were also presidential elections taking place during the time period of the content analysis. This event is reflected in the above average amount of airtime both Taiwanese channels allot to the coverage of politics. On the other end of the scale, both Chilean channels pay with only 10% of the total airtime very little attention to these topics, and the same applies to the European commercial channels BEL_VTM, POR_TVI and GER_RTL (14% to 18%).

Other important categories with substantial coverage in TV news include economy, social issues and internal order. The very high level of attention paid to economic issues by the U.S. public channel PBS (27%) is rather striking and can be traced back to a number of in-depth

Table 9: Percentage of airtime devoted to ten topic categories

TV-Channel	Politics and military	Economy	Social issues	Culture	Environment and science	Internal order	Sports	Crime and violence	Fashion and human interest	Accidents
BEL_VRT	24%	11%	16%	8%	6%	10%	15%	4%	4%	2%
BEL_VTM	14%	9%	21%	8%	5%	13%	9%	6%	9%	5%
CDN_CBC	34%	9%	11%	9%	3%	12%	5%	3%	9%	6%
CDN_CTV	30%	8%	13%	2%	3%	15%	9%	2%	12%	6%
CHI_TVN	10%	10%	12%	9%	4%	11%	27%	4%	7%	4%
CHI_Mega	10%	10%	15%	6%	3%	13%	23%	5%	7%	7%
GER_ARD	38%	19%	10%	6%	6%	8%	10%	0.4%	1%	1%
GER_RTL	18%	13%	12%	4%	5%	11%	15%	5%	10%	6%
ISR_IBA	39%	6%	14%	8%	2%	18%	4%	3%	5%	2%
ISR_Arutz2	34%	6%	13%	9%	3%	16%	5%	5%	6%	2%
ITA_RAI1	39%	8%	9%	10%	3%	14%	5%	3%	6%	4%
ITA_Canal5	29%	8%	7%	8%	4%	21%	4%	5%	9%	4%
POL_TVP1	38%	11%	16%	11%	2%	10%	4%	2%	2%	4%
POL_TVN	30%	10%	19%	7%	2%	11%	7%	5%	4%	4%
POR_RTP	25%	13%	22%	5%	1%	15%	11%	2%	4%	2%
POR_TVI	18%	15%	20%	6%	1%	17%	13%	4%	4%	2%
SUI_SF	32%	14%	10%	11%	4%	7%	10%	2%	6%	4%
SUI_TSR	26%	12%	15%	11%	4%	11%	11%	2%	7%	2%
TPE_PTS	33%	14%	23%	9%	6%	4%	2%	0%	7%	2%
TPE_TVBS	36%	10%	11%	6%	2%	12%	1%	2%	14%	6%
USA_PBS	45%	27%	16%	3%	3%	3%	1%	0.4%	1%	1%
USA_NBC	46%	13%	20%	3%	3%	3%	2%	2%	6%	2%
Total	27%	11%	15%	7%	3%	12%	10%	4%	7%	4%

Note: Base is the news hole per channel and the total news hole of all twenty-two channels, respectively.

analyses of the slumping economic development, of the development on the stock market in the USA and of the election candidates' position on how to deal with the situation. Social issues are a quite heterogeneous topic category and include a vast number of individual topics ranging from transportation, health, welfare, social services, education, housing, social relations to communication. Therefore, it is rather difficult to interpret the results, as among TV channels with highest and lowest proportion of airtime allotted to these topics are both public service channels and commercial channel from various countries. News concerning internal order issues such as judicial decisions, demonstration, and terrorism plays a particularly important role in TV news in Israel, Portugal and Italy; TV channels in these countries assign comparatively a great amount of airtime to these topics (14% to 21%). The prominent coverage in Israel is partly due to the importance of the issue of terrorism in this country, with three major events happening in the time of the analysis: the Jerusalem Yeshiva shooting⁷⁰ on Mar 6th, the assassination of the Hezbollah member Imad Mughniyah, and the Palestine rocket attacks on Sderot, a city close to the Gaza strip.

Three categories that receive only marginal prominence in TV news are environment and science, accidents and disasters, and violence and crime. Interestingly, channels with the highest amounts of airtime assigned to violence and crime are all commercial channels (BEL_VTM, ISR_Arutz2, GER_RTL, POL_TVN, ITA_Canale5) as well as both Chilean channels which already stand out with their low coverage of politics. Commercial ownership seems also highly associated with an above average of attention paid to accidents and disasters: most of the channels with the largest proportion of airtime for these topics are again commercial channels from various countries (CHI_Mega, GER_RTL, CDN_CTV, TPE_TVBS, BEL_VTM). The same pattern applies to the coverage of human interest issues such as celebrities, fashion, and weather with the commercial channels TPE_TVBS, GER_RTL, and CDN_CTV all devoting at least 10% of the news hole to cover these topics.

Sports as a news category receive very different amounts of coverage by the TV channels in the sample. Again, both Chilean channels stand out with a remarkable share of around one fourth of the airtime dedicated to sports alone (23% and 27%). As the Chilean newscasts in

⁷⁰ On the day of this terrorist attack, the entire newscast on IBA was devoted to its coverage. However, this newscast was not included in the analysis because the results of the whole content analysis for this channel would have been substantially biased toward this topic category.

the sample are comparatively long (43 to 45 minutes), this means that in each evening newscast, around ten minutes are devoted to the coverage of sports results, reports about athletes etc. Other countries in which sports coverage also plays an important role in TV news – but not as prominent as in Chile – include Belgium, Germany, Portugal, and Switzerland (9% to 15%). In contrast, sports as a news topic is hardly paid any attention to by news editors of the U.S. channels PBS and NBC and the Taiwanese channels PTS and TVBS (1% to 2%). A last pattern worth mentioning refers to the coverage of cultural and religious issues; overall, this topic category does not receive much coverage. However, it is worth pointing out that TV channels paying the highest amount of attention to these issues are almost all public channels (SUI_TSR, POL_TVP1, SUI_SF, ITA_RAI1, CHI_TVN, TPE_PTS, CDN_CBC). It seems that the public service mission concerning coverage of these kinds of TV news content is still highly valued by public channels around the world.

This overview about topic coverage in the sampled newscasts is naturally a quite brief discussion of the findings. An in-depth analysis, however, cannot take all results into account. Therefore, I will concentrate in the following on the causal analysis of coverage of the socially most relevant topics politics and economy and topics of low social relevance (crime and violence, fashion and human interest, accidents and disasters). The main reason for this focus is because the discussion of consequences of commercialization revolves mostly around these topics (cf. Chapter 2.2).

5.1.1 Coverage of politics and economy

With regard to topics determined as having the highest social relevance – internal and international politics, defence and military issues and economy – the results indicate that news stories in these topic areas are paid least attention by TV channels in Chile, Belgium, and Portugal. Other TV channels which fare below average in this regard include the commercial broadcasters in Germany (RTL), Italy (Canale5), Canada (CTV) as well as the Swiss French-language public broadcaster TSR. In contrast, in Taiwan and the USA, both TV channels devote significant amounts of airtime to cover these topic areas, partly because of the aforementioned elections taking place in these countries. Substantial coverage of politics and economy is also found for the public service broadcasters in Germany (ARD), Poland (TVP1), Italy (Rai1), German-speaking part of Switzerland (SF), Israel (IBA), and Canada (CBC).

Clear differences between public service and commercial channels with regard to coverage of the two socially most relevant topic areas politics and economy are discernible in Belgium, Germany, Israel, Italy, Canada, Poland and the USA.

This cursory outline suggests that strong competition on the news market and higher dependency on advertising within the TV system as well as commercial ownership lead to a low coverage of politics and economy. On the other hand, public ownership – regardless of system variation – seems to have a positive influence on the amount of airtime devoted to these topic categories. To identify combinations of economic factors associated with high or low coverage of these topics in a more systematic manner, I will conduct two QCAs, one with high coverage and the other one with low coverage as the outcome (cf. Chapter 4.5).

Table 10 shows the combined proportions of airtime devoted to topics of highest and lowest social relevance for each channel as well as the membership scores assigned to each channel in the fuzzy set of high coverage of both types of topics. In the set of TV channels with high coverage of socially most relevant topics, membership scores are determined as follows: TV channels devoting more than 50% of the airtime to cover the topic categories politics and economy are assigned full membership; TV channels devoting less than 30% of their airtime to these topics are assigned full non-membership; and the cross-over point is set at 40%. In other words, TV channels devoting at least half of their newscast to cover topics of highest social relevance are considered to have a high coverage of these topics and TV channels that fail to cover these topics in less than a third of their newscast display a low coverage of these topics. TV channels devoting 40% to 50% of their airtime to politics and economy are more in the set of channels with “high coverage of socially relevant topics” than out, and the opposite applies to TV channels with 30% to 40% of airtime dedicating to these topic categories (more out than in).

According to Ragin, set membership should be determined “according to external standards” (2008, p. 8). However, as the method of QCA has rarely been applied to comparative media research, these external standards simply do not exist for content indicators. Therefore, the calibration process for set membership for the outcome in this QCA and in the following analyses is oriented on the empirical distribution with the cross-over point set roughly at the total average (in the present QCA at 40%).

Table 10: Coverage of topics of high and low social relevance

TV-Channel	Airtime devoted to topics of high social relevance*	Membership in "high coverage of relevant topics"	Airtime devoted to topics of low social relevance**	Membership in "high coverage of less relevant topics"
BEL_VRT	34%	0.3	10%	0.3
BEL_VTM	23%	0	21%	1
CDN_CBC	43%	0.7	18%	0.7
CDN_CTV	39%	0.3	20%	0.7
CHI_TVN	20%	0	16%	0.7
CHI_Mega	20%	0	19%	0.7
GER_ARD	57%	1	3%	0
GER_RTL	31%	0.3	22%	1
ISR_IBA	45%	0.7	10%	0
ISR_Arutz2	39%	0.3	14%	0.3
ITA_RAI1	46%	0.7	13%	0.3
ITA_Canale5	37%	0.3	17%	0.7
POL_TVP1	50%	1	7%	0
POL_TVN	40%	0.3	13%	0.3
POR_RTP	37%	0.3	8%	0
POR_TVI	33%	0.3	10%	0
SUI_SF	46%	0.7	12%	0.3
SUI_TSR	37%	0.3	11%	0.3
TPE_PTS	47%	0.7	9%	0
TPE_TVBS	46%	0.7	22%	1
USA_PBS	72%	1	2%	0
USA_NBC	59%	1	10%	0.3
Total	38%	-	15%	-

Note: * Internal politics, international politics, military and defence, economy, business, commerce, labour and industrial relations

** Crime and violence, fashion, human interest and weather, accidents and disasters

Let us start with the analysis of the causal conditions leading to a high coverage of socially relevant topics as this QCA demonstrates quite nicely how the method works. This analysis aims to find out which economic factors (or combinations of factors) out of the six factors under focus are sufficient for a high coverage of politics and economy. Table 11 and Table 12 show the complex solution and the intermediate solution for this QCA. The first column shows the number of causal recipes found for the complex and intermediate solution. Columns two to seven indicate whether the respective causal condition is present (✓) or

absent (✖) or not contained in the respective causal recipe at all (blank cells). Columns eight, nine, and ten contain the raw coverage, unique coverage and consistency scores for each causal recipe. The last column shows TV channels covered by the respective causal path, i.e. channels that have a membership score higher than 0.5 in the respective causal combination and also display the outcome (or at least are considered more in the set of TV channels displaying the outcome than out). TV channels constituting empirical instances not consistent with the solution, i.e. channels that are covered by the respective causal recipe but do not display the outcome are not shown in the results.

A quick glance at Table 11 makes clear the disadvantage of the complex solution: there are six highly intricate causal recipes which contain all or almost all six causal factors. These causal recipes are narrowly formulated and are thus very specific combinations of many conditions so that they apply to only few cases: for example, the fourth causal recipe contains all six causal conditions and thus applies only to the Taiwanese commercial channel TVBS. Naturally, it is not the aim of any comparative study to reach the conclusion that one TV channel with a very specific combination of characteristics displays a certain outcome. In contrast, the main goal is to identify characteristics shared by at least several TV channels that allow drawing more general conclusions about relationship between economic influences and news performance. In QCA parlance, more parsimonious solutions than the ones found in the complex solution should be looked for.

As discussed in Chapter 4.5, the method of QCA allows the researcher to engage in counterfactual reasoning to achieve more parsimonious solutions that have levels of consistency and coverage similar to more complex recipes but that are more readily interpretable. Counterfactual reasoning involves making assumptions about whether remainders – combinations of causal conditions that do not have any empirical instances – would yield the outcome if they existed. The most parsimonious solution can be found if all remainders were treated as potential simplifying assumptions. However, Ragin recommends the use of intermediate solution that is obtained if only “easy counterfactuals” are permitted, i.e. remainders that are more plausible. Table 12 presents the intermediate solution for the present QCA, based on the assumption that the absence of economic influences should contribute to a high coverage of socially relevant topics.

Table 11: QCA complex solution for high coverage of topics of high social relevance

Causal recipe	Strong market competition	Strong ad-dependency (TV system)	Weak PSB position	Commercial ownership	High market research activity	Strong ad-dependency (TV channel)	Raw coverage	Unique coverage	Consistency	TV channels in the causal recipe
1		×	×	×	✓	×	0.18	0.04	0.83	GER_ARD, SUI_SF
2	✓	✓	×	×	✓	×	0.30	0.04	1	ISR_IBA, TPE PTS, USA_PBS
3	×	✓	×	×	✓	✓	0.24	0.10	0.81	ITA_RAI1, POL_TVP1
4	✓	✓	✓	✓	×	✓	0.09	0.09	1	TPE_TVBS
5	✓		×	×	✓	×	0.20	0	0.73	SUI_SF
6	✓	✓		×	✓	×	0.35	0	0.90	ISR_IBA, USA_PBS

Table 12: QCA intermediate solution for high coverage of topics of high social relevance

Causal recipe	Strong market competition	Strong ad-dependency (TV system)	Weak PSB position	Commercial ownership	High market research activity	Strong ad-dependency (TV channel)	Raw coverage	Unique coverage	Consistency	TV channels in the causal recipe
1				×		×	0.51	0.25	0.80	ISR_IBA, TPE PTS, USA_PBS, GER_ARD, SUI_SF
2					×		0.18	0.09	1	TPE PTS, TPE_TVBS
3	×		×	×			0.30	0.10	0.85	POL_TVP1, GER_ARD, ITA_RAI1

It is important to point out that these assumptions about the relationship between economic influences and news performance apply only to the remainders and are thus used to simplify the complex solution already found. Otherwise, it would be circular reasoning to use assumptions about a certain relationship to find out whether this relationship exists. The causal recipes found in the intermediate solution (and also in the parsimonious solution) still have to be supported by the empirical data, i.e. they have to be sufficiently consistent (their consistency values have to be at least .75). On the other hand, they are almost always simpler than the complex solution and thus can have higher coverage values, thus higher empirical relevance and, most importantly, are more interpretable. This is best illustrated by a comparison of all three QCA solutions for high coverage of socially relevant topics: Table 13 shows all three solutions with the complex solution on the left-hand side and the parsimonious solution on the right-hand side marking the two endpoints of the complexity/parsimony continuum.⁷¹

Table 13: Comparison of three QCA solutions for high coverage of topics of high social relevance

Complex solution	Intermediate solution	Parsimonious solution
$\sim AS \bullet \sim W \bullet \sim O \bullet MR \bullet \sim AC +$ $C \bullet AS \bullet \sim W \bullet \sim O \bullet MR \bullet \sim AC +$ $C \bullet \sim W \bullet \sim O \bullet MR \bullet \sim AC +$ $C \bullet AS \bullet \sim O \bullet MR \bullet \sim AC +$	$\sim O \bullet \sim AC +$	$\sim AC +$
$\sim C \bullet AS \bullet \sim W \bullet \sim O \bullet MR \bullet AC +$	$\sim C \bullet \sim W \bullet \sim O +$	$\sim C \bullet \sim O +$
$C \bullet AS \bullet W \bullet O \bullet \sim MR \bullet AC$	$\sim MR$	$\sim MR$

Note: \sim denotes the absence of the respective causal condition; \bullet denotes logical AND; $+$ denotes logical OR. C: strong market competition; AS: strong ad-dependency (TV system); W: weak PSB position; O: commercial ownership; S: traded on the stock market; MR: strong market research activity; AC: strong ad-dependency (TV channel). The first causal recipe in the complex solution is for example “NO advertising dependency on the system level AND NO weak PSB position in the market AND NO commercial ownership etc.”

The intricate causal recipes one, two, five and six in the complex solution in Table 11 can be simplified to one causal recipe with only one causal condition in the parsimonious solution

⁷¹ Table 13 presents a compressed presentation of the results in Table 11 and Table 12. The parsimonious solution can be found in Appendix F.

($\sim AC$) and also one causal recipe with two causal conditions in the intermediate solution ($\sim O \bullet \sim AC$). Note that all causal recipes in the complex solution are subsets of the causal recipe in the parsimonious solution, as they are all subsets of $\sim AC$. This follows from the fact that both solutions have to cover the rows of the truth table with the outcome; the difference between both solutions is that the parsimonious solution incorporates many additional rows – the remainders. The same subset relation applied to the intermediate solution which is also a subset of the parsimonious solution and a superset of the complex solution (all causal recipes in the complex solution are subsets of $\sim O \bullet \sim AC$ and the set $\sim O \bullet \sim AC$ is in turn a subset of $\sim AC$). Thus, the subset relation between solutions is maintained along the complexity/parsimony continuum. In contrast to the parsimonious solution, the intermediate solution covers only additional rows of the truth table with the outcome that are plausible, i.e. “easy counterfactuals.”

In other words, all three solutions have to cover the rows of the truth table with the outcome⁷² and thus all identify causal combinations producing the outcome but with a different degree of complexity. The complex solution leads to “results that are needlessly complex” whereas the parsimonious solution leads to “results that are unrealistically parsimonious due to the incorporation of difficult counterfactuals” (Ragin, 2008, p. 163). The intermediate solution strikes a balance between complexity and parsimony; therefore, I will follow Ragin’s recommendation by interpreting only the intermediate solution in the remaining of this study.

Let us now turn to the substantive interpretation of the QCA intermediate solution in Table 12 which specifies under which conditions TV channels show a high coverage of the socially relevant topics politics and economy. The first causal recipe indicates that public ownership (absence of commercial ownership) in combination with a low dependency on advertising as a source of revenue leads to a high attention to socially relevant topics. This interpretation is consistently supported by the public channels in the USA and Germany and the Swiss German-language channel SF which devote almost half or even more than two-thirds of their airtime to the coverage of politics and economy (USA_PBS: 72%; GER_ARD: 57%; SUI_SF:

⁷² This can be seen in Table 11 and Table 12 which show that TV channels covered by causal recipes in the complex solution are the same as the ones covered by the intermediate solution (and also by the parsimonious solution, see Appendix F).

46%). The public channels in Israel (IBA) and Taiwan (PTS) are “near misses”, i.e. their membership in the causal recipe is higher than in the outcome, but they still devote a great amount of airtime to cover socially significant topics (45% and 47%, respectively). The Belgian channel VRT and the French-language Swiss channel TSR do not support this interpretation: they are both public channels and do not depend on advertising to a high degree, but do not pay a lot of attention to these topics, either (and are therefore not shown in Table 12). Due to these cases, the causal argument that public ownership in combination with the channel’s low dependency on advertising is sufficient for a high coverage of politics and economy is not supported by the empirical data to 100%, but only to 80%.

The second causal recipe explains the high coverage of politics and economy by the two Taiwanese channels. This specific combination of conditions applies only to these two channels and has therefore only a limited empirical relevance. This is also expressed by the rather low raw coverage and unique coverage of this causal recipe (.18 and .09). The third causal recipe covers the public channels in Poland, Germany and Italy which operate in a market characterized by weak competition and strong PSB channels. Apparently, these channels are neither exposed to commercial pressure from ownership nor from a commercialized market environment and are thus able to pay a significant amount of attention to covering politics and economy (48% to 57% of the total airtime). Note that the German public channel ARD is covered in two causal recipes (one and three): this is a good example for the concept of “equifinality” which specifies that there are several causal paths leading to the same outcome.

Both raw coverage and unique coverage scores of the first causal recipe are much higher than the remaining two recipes, indicating a higher empirical relevance of this combination (which is also obvious from the fact that this recipe covers five TV channels whereas the other two recipes cover two and three channels, respectively). Thus, it seems that characteristics of TV channels, most notably public ownership and a low dependency on advertising prevent a commercialized reporting that excludes socially relevant topics that are potentially not attractive to mass audiences. Public service channels that do not greatly depend on advertising as a source of revenue are able to resist economic pressures and stick to their public service mission by devoting airtime and resources to cover socially relevant topics. On the other hand, public channels that depend to a higher degree on advertising but

operate in a less commercialized environment (weak competition and strong PSB position) seem also to be able to escape commercial pressures and display a high news performance in this regard.

Let us now turn to the analysis of the causal conditions shaping low coverage of topics of highest social relevance. Table 14 and Table 15 show the complex solution and the intermediate solution for this QCA. Compared to the QCA for high coverage of socially relevant topics, the intermediate solution in this QCA is only slightly more parsimonious than the complex solution because it does not reduce the number of causal recipes but only removes some causal conditions from causal recipes two and three. As noted, I will interpret only the intermediate solution except for cases in which causal recipes in the intermediate solution are not consistently supported by the empirical data, i.e. have too low consistency values.

The first causal recipe in Table 15 implies that TV channels with a high market research activity and a strong dependency on advertising that operate in a competitive market and a TV system that is primarily financed by advertising pay little attention to the socially relevant topics politics and economy. The television systems in Belgium, Canada, Chile, Israel, Portugal and USA are all characterized by a relatively strong competition on the news market and a high dependency on advertising within the television system. This market environment in combination with a high market research activity and strong dependency on advertising on the part of the respective TV channels leads to a low news performance as displayed by both channels in Chile and Portugal and the commercial channels in Belgium, Canada and Israel. Among these channels, the proportion of airtime devoted to politics and economy ranges from only 20% (both Chilean channels) to 39% (Arutz2 and CND_CTV).⁷³

The second causal recipe in the intermediate solution applies to TV systems in Belgium and Portugal – both European countries with a competitive news market, a strong dependency on advertising revenues in the broadcast system and a relatively strong position of public service channels. As this causal combination does not include ad-dependency of the channels but only their market research activity, it covers both commercial and public

⁷³ The Canadian public channel CBC and the U.S. channel NBC are both covered by this causal recipe but do not display the outcome (low coverage of politics and economy) because they both fare above average or high above average. Their performance can thus not be explained by this causal combination.

Table 14: QCA complex solution for low coverage of topics of high social relevance

Causal recipe	Strong market competition	Strong ad-dependency (TV system)	Weak PSB position	Commercial ownership	High market research activity	Strong ad-dependency (TV channel)	Raw coverage	Unique coverage	Consistency	TV channels in the causal recipe
1	✓	✓			✓	✓	0.66	0.32	0.84	BEL_VTM, CDN_CTV, CHI_TVN, CHI_Mega, ISR_Arutz2, POR_RTP, POR_TVI
2	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓		0.29	0.04	0.91	BEL_VRT, POR_RTP
3	✗		✗	✓	✓	✓	0.24	0.14	0.90	POL_TVN, GER_RTL, ITA_Canale5

Table 15: QCA intermediate solution for low coverage of topics of high social relevance

Causal recipe	Strong market competition	Strong ad-dependency (TV system)	Weak PSB position	Commercial ownership	High market research activity	Strong ad-dependency (TV channel)	Raw coverage	Unique coverage	Consistency	TV channels in the causal recipe
1	✓	✓			✓	✓	0.66	0.10	0.84	BEL_VTM, CDN_CTV, CHI_TVN, CHI_Mega, ISR_Arutz2, POR_RTP, POR_TVI
2	✓	✓	✗		✓		0.44	0.04	0.94	BEL_VRT, BEL_VTM, POR_RTP, POR_TVI
3				✓	✓	✓	0.50	0.14	0.69	CDN_CTV, GER_RTL, CHI_Mega, ITA_Canale5, POL_TVN, BEL_VTM, POR_TVI

channels in the two countries whose coverage of politics and economy is either slightly below average (BEL_VRT, POR_RTP and POR_TVI with 33% to 37%) or well below average (BEL_VTM with only 23%).

The third causal recipe in the intermediate solution contains all three channel-related factors. However, this causal recipe is not well supported by the empirical data because its consistency value (0.69) is too low. Therefore, it is necessary to turn to the corresponding causal recipe in the complex solution which contains two additional causal conditions and indicates that only commercial channels with high market research activities which operate in a market with low competition and a strong PSB presence display a low coverage of socially relevant topics. This combination applies to the European commercial channels GER_RTL, ITA_Canale5 and POL_TVN. These channels have apparently adopted a strategy of differentiation to distinguish themselves from the public channels in their respective country that take a strong position on the audience market. Whereas these public channels devote a great deal of airtime to cover politics and economy, the commercial channels in these countries pay only little attention to these topics.

These first two QCAs illustrate quite nicely the advantages of the method: with six economic factors under focus and hence 64 logically possible causal combinations and twenty-two TV channels, the task of discerning relevant combinations of causal conditions and the outcome and assigning the appropriate cases to each combination is next to impossible without computational support. The truth table algorithm in fsQCA provides exactly this kind of support: it helps identify combinations of commercial factors characterizing TV channels and their market environment that are associated with low or high news performance. With respect to coverage of politics and economy, topics with the highest social relevance, the amount of coverage of nineteen TV channels can be traced back to certain economic factors or combination of factors so that research questions RQ1a and RQ1b can be answered by means of the QCA results.

High coverage of politics and economy can mostly be explained by the following characteristics of TV channels (RQ1a): public ownership in combination with no or only weak dependency on advertising revenues (ISR_IBA, TPE PTS, USA_PBS, GER_ARD, SUI_SF) or solely a weak market research orientation (TPE PTS, TPE_TVBS). In contrast, low coverage of politics and economy can be traced back to economic factors operating on the level of

television system and to characteristics of TV channels. Economic influences on system level are most notably a highly competitive news market and a strong dependency on advertising to finance the whole TV system (RQ1b). TV channels in Belgium, Portugal and Chile are here cases in point: regardless of their ownership and revenue structure, both public and commercial channels in all three countries do not devote large amounts of resources and airtime to the topics politics and economy, with the Belgian commercial channel and both Chilean channels faring far below average. With reference to economic influences on the channel level (RQ1a), commercial ownership combined with a high market research activity causes a low coverage of topics of high social relevance but supposedly not attractive to large audiences (BEL_VTM, CDN_CTV, CHI_Mega, ISR_Arutz2, POR_TVI, GER_RTL, ITA_Canale5, POL_TVN). In the case of the commercial channels BEL_VTM and POR_TVI, both system and channel level explanations might be valid. This is a very good instance that illustrates the concept of causal complexity or equifinality that describes the situation when the same outcome can be explained by different causal combinations.

Regarding combinations of channel characteristics and market environment which have an influence on the amount of coverage of politics and economy, the QCA results indicate that public channels operating in a less commercialized environment lacking strong competition and in which PSB channels still enjoy a strong position also display a high coverage of these topics (POL_TVP1, GER_ARD, ITA_RAI1). Conversely, commercial channels in this market environment (POL_TVN, GER_RTL, ITA_Canale5) seem to have embraced the opposite content strategy to differentiate themselves from their public competitors. Another combination of channel characteristics and market environment conducive to a low coverage of politics and economy applies to TV channels with a high frequency of market search activities and strong ad-dependency that operate in a competitive market and a high ad-dependency within the TV system (BEL_VTM, CDN_CTV, CHI_TVN, CHI_Mega, ISR_Arutz2, POR_RTP, POR_TVI).

The empirical outcome of three TV channels (the Canadian public channel CBC, the Swiss French-language channel TSR and the U.S. channel NBC) does not support any relationships found for the other channels. The high proportion of politics and economy reporting by the U.S. commercial channel NBC – which is rather expected to face severe economic pressure and thus not pay a lot of attention to these topics – can well be accounted for by the U.S.

primaries that took place during the four weeks of the content analysis. The public Swiss channel TSR's below average performance cannot be explained by the available data, it operates in a less commercialized environment and does not depend on advertising revenues to a high degree but does not pay a lot of attention to socially relevant topics, either. The case of the Canadian public channel CBC is also rather ambivalent: except for the absence of commercial ownership, all other factors rather imply a low news performance. As this channel fares slightly above average with 43%, the present data do not allow a firm interpretation.

5.1.2 Coverage of crime, violence, human interest, accidents and disasters

Let us now consider news performance with regard to coverage of topics generally considered to be able to attract audience attention but not being of great social relevance. The literature review of consequences of commercialization processes shows that most authors fear that commercialized media report excessively on accidents and disasters, crime and violence or celebrities and human interest to the neglect of "hard news" like politics and public affairs (cf. Chapter 2.2). In order to answer the research questions on which channel characteristics and market environment support coverage of these topics of rather low social relevance (RQ1c and RQ1d), I again conduct two QCAs with high coverage and low coverage of these topics as the outcome. Membership score of the set of TV channels with low news performance is shown in Table 10: TV channels devoting one fifth or more of their airtime to cover these topics are assigned full membership; full non-membership is assigned when only one tenth or less of the airtime is used for reporting these topics; and the cross-over point is set at 15%. Table 16 and Table 17 show the QCA intermediate solutions for high and low coverage of crime and violence, human interest, accidents and disaster.

With respect to channels devoting large amounts of airtime to cover socially less relevant topics, the QCA results in Table 16 confirm critics' assertions of the consequences of commercialization processes: TV channels operating in a commercialized environment as measured via market competition, ad-dependency of the whole TV system and a weak position of PSB channels tend to dedicate a unduly high proportion of their airtime to cover

Table 16: QCA intermediate solution for high coverage of topics of low social relevance

Causal recipe	Strong market competition	Strong ad-dependency (TV system)	Weak PSB position	Commercial ownership	High market research activity	Strong ad-dependency (TV channel)	Raw coverage	Unique coverage	Consistency	TV channels in the causal recipe
1	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	0.50	0.23	0.75	CDN_CBC, CDN_CTV, CHI_TVNI, CHI_Mega
2	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	0.31	0.05	0.79	CDN_CTV, CHI_Mega, TPE_TVBS
3		✗		✓	✓	✓	0.22	0.12	1	GER_RTL

Table 17: QCA intermediate solution for low coverage of topics of low social relevance

Causal recipe	Strong market competition	Strong ad-dependency (TV system)	Weak PSB position	Commercial ownership	High market research activity	Strong ad-dependency (TV channel)	Raw coverage	Unique coverage	Consistency	TV channels in the causal recipe
1			✗	✗			0.46	0.18	0.87	BEL_VRT, GER_ARD, ITA_RAI1, POL_TVP1, POR_RTP, SUI_SF, SUI_TSR
2				✗		✗	0.52	0.25	1	ISR_IBA, TPE_PTS, USA_PBS, BEL_VRT, GER_ARD, SUI_SF, SUI_TSR

crime, violence, human interest topics, accidents and disasters. The first two causal recipes of this QCA both contain all three economic factors on system level which characterize the market environment in Canada, Chile, Taiwan, Israel and the USA. This commercialized market environment in combination with high dependency on advertising accounts for the high amount of coverage of socially less relevant topics by both channels in Canada and Chile and by the Taiwanese commercial channel TVBS. The cases of the Canadian and Chilean public channel underline the importance of the market environment in which TV channels operate: in face of strong economic pressures from the market, these public channels seem to have adapted a less “public service”-like coverage by also devoting a certain amount of airtime to topics presumably able to attract audience attention. The commercial channels in these countries as well as the Taiwanese commercial channel TVBS are almost ideal types of TV channels under economic influences as discussed in the literature review: they operate in a commercialized environment and face pressure from their owner and advertising clients to attract mass audiences and respond to these pressures by focusing on topics presumably attractive to audiences. The commercial channels ISR_Arutz2 and USA_NBC are also covered by the first causal recipe but do not display the outcome. NBC’s extensive coverage of politics due to the U.S. primaries supposedly did not leave enough airtime for substantial coverage of other topics. It can be only speculated about the reasons why the Israeli commercial channel Arutz2 which operates in a highly commercialized environment does not pay a lot of attention to topics of low social relevance but attractive to a mass audience. Despite being a commercial channel, Arutz2 is partly controlled by members of the publicly regulated Second Authority for Television and Radio and thus probably still has to adhere to public service obligations.

The third causal recipe covers only the German commercial channel RTL and corroborates the previous findings for this channel: vis-à-vis strong PSB channels with substantial coverage of politics and economy, RTL has apparently adopted a differentiation strategy by neglecting these socially relevant topics and focusing on the coverage of crime, violence, accidents, and human interest themes. All in all, the QCA results on high coverage of socially less relevant topics have a rather limited explanatory power. The recipes found apply only to two television systems (Canada and Chile), and two other commercial channels (TPE_TVBS and GER_RTL). The second recipe is only weakly supported by the data due to the Israeli channel

Arutz2 and the U.S. channel NBC whose performance is not as low as their combination of causal conditions implies.

In contrast, the QCA results on low coverage of crime, violence, human interest, accidents and disasters are quite unambiguous. Low coverage of these socially less relevant topics can be best explained by characteristics of TV channels, most notably public ownership (Table 17). The first causal recipe contains public service channels in all European countries in the sample. In these countries, PSB channels still enjoy a relatively secure position. The second combination of causal conditions identified as sufficient to cause a low coverage of less relevant topics refers to public channels that are not or hardly dependent on advertising as a source of revenue. Both causal recipes are well supported by the empirical evidence (consistency values are 0.87 and 1): all PSB channels in these recipes pay comparatively little attention to crime, accidents, and human interest topics (USA_PBS: 2% to RAI1: 13%). RQ1c and RQ1d thus can be easily answered for low coverage of socially less relevant topics. Public service channels less dependent on advertising and public service channels in markets where PSB still enjoys a strong presence all devote little airtime to topics attractive to the audience but of low social relevance.

Two highly interesting patterns emerge from the analyses of coverage of socially most relevant and less relevant topics. High news performance in the sense of high coverage of the former and low coverage of the latter is explained consistently by channel-level characteristics, most notably public ownership, whereas low news performance can be traced back to economic influences on both channel and system level. Economic factors operating on a system level seem to be strongly influential in Chile, Portugal, Belgium, Canada and Israel – countries in which the news market is competitive and the TV system is financed by advertising to a high degree. Except for the public channels in Canada and Israel (which fare slightly above average), the remaining channels in these countries all display an average or far below average news performance with regard to socially relevant topics. Both Chilean channels are cases in point: they both devote only one fifth of their airtime to these topics, only slightly more airtime than for socially less relevant topics. With respect to influences on the channel level, commercial ownership seems to exert a significant influence on topics coverage: Almost all commercial channels devote less airtime to politics and

economy than the respective public channel in their country,⁷⁴ and channels that fare worst with regard to coverage of crime, violence, accidents, and human interest, are all commercial channels.

High news performance is more readily explained: it seems that the mission of informing the public is highly valued by public service channels, most notably in European countries where PSB in general still enjoys an important position on the market and in society at large. The European public channels seem to be able to resist economic pressures and pay a lot of attention to socially relevant topics and very little attention to topics that are supposedly attractive to a mass audience but not inherently relevant.⁷⁵ In countries with a rather weak PSB tradition – USA, Canada, Taiwan, Chile, or Israel – it is consistently public channels that do not derive any revenues from advertising that fare best with regard to relevance in reporting (USA_PBS, TPE PTS and ISR_IBA). Public channels independent from advertising revenues and thus from competition for mass audiences seem to have complete freedom to devote great amount of airtime and resources to report on political and economic themes while at the same time largely ignoring topics supposedly able to attract a mass audience such as crime, violence, accidents, or human interest.

5.1.3 News topics in headlines

Finally, let us have a look at what kind of news items were mentioned in the headlines of newscast. The underlying assumption for this analysis is that only those news items that are regarded as most relevant and interesting by the editorial staff of the respective newscast will be mentioned in the headlines as the most important news of the day. This analysis relates to an additional operationalization of relevance: as there are only a few news items that can be mentioned in headlines and if headlines are important to attract audiences, does the editorial staff decide to highlight political and economic themes or topics appealing to a

⁷⁴ Only in Taiwan and the USA, both channels cover politics extensively, most likely due to the elections being held during the time the content analysis was conducted (see above).

⁷⁵ Exceptions are in part the public channels in Belgium and Portugal – two countries with a competitive news market and strong dependency on advertising within the whole broadcast system – which fare slightly below average regarding the coverage of politics and economy. However, these two channels do not pay a lot of attention to the topics crime, violence, accidents, and human interest, either.

mass audience but of rather low social relevance? For the sake of clarity, Table 18 shows only the combined percentages of topics in headlines for topics of highest social relevance (politics and economy) and for socially less important topics (crime and violence, human interest, accidents and disasters). Base for the percentages is the number of news items mentioned in the headlines of each newscast.

Table 18: Topics of news items mentioned in headlines

TV-Channel	Topics of highest social relevance	Topics of low social relevance	News items mentioned in headlines
BEL_VRT	45%	19%	163
BEL_VTM	28%	44%	127
CDN_CBC	43%	31%	101
CDN_CTV	32%	38%	88
CHI_TVN	26%	33%	170
CHI_Mega	31%	27%	218
GER_ARD*	-	-	-
GER_RTL	45%	52%	85
ISR_IBA	58%	20%	127
ISR_Arutz2	57%	14%	69
ITA_RAI1	64%	16%	253
ITA_Canale5	54%	19%	237
POL_TVP1	59%	12%	92
POL_TVN	51%	21%	140
POR_RTP	51%	12%	106
POR_TVI*	-	-	-
SUI_SF	72%	11%	127
SUI_TSR	59%	22%	264
TPE PTS	53%	15%	88
TPE_TVBS*	-	-	-
USA_PBS	82%	5%	164
USA_NBC	69%	15%	203
Total	52%	22%	2822

Note: * No headlines in newscast

On average, news about politics and economy is most frequently mentioned in headlines. Half of all news items highlighted in this manner are about these topics in contrast to news items about socially less relevant topics which are mentioned in only one fifth of highlighted

news items. However, there are substantial cross-national and cross-channel differences that corroborate the results found in the previous analyses. Among those channels that accord highest significance to politics and economy via highlighting in headlines and least attention to socially less relevant topics are six public TV channels (USA_PBS, SUI_SF, ITA_RAI1, POL_TVP1, TPE PTS, POR RTP); most of these channels have also been identified in the previous analyses as channels with high news performance. In contrast, both public and commercial channels in Chile and Canada as well as the commercial channels BEL_VTL and GER RTL seem to pursue the strategy of highlighting crime and violence, human interest, and accidents and disasters in headlines to attract news audience at the expense of socially more important topics. The Belgian public channel VRT does not focus a lot of attention to these topics, but does not give very high prominence to the politics and economy, either. Chile, Canada, and Belgium have been identified above as countries in which the news market is competitive and the television system is financed by advertising to a high degree and in which both public and commercial channels tend to neglect politics and economy. It appears that these commercial factors do not only have an influence on the amount of airtime devoted to each news topics but also what kind of news is accorded the most prominent place in the newscast.

The Swiss French-language public channel TSR is across all analyses so far a rather ambivalent case. Compared with the other newscasts in the sample, its newscast devotes rather little airtime both to the coverage of politics and economy (37%) and to socially less important topics (11%). However, both kinds of topics are comparatively frequently highlighted in the headlines (59% and 22%, respectively). These rather contradictory patterns thus do not allow a conclusive interpretation of the channel's news performance. In Israel, both channels are fairly similar regarding topics highlighted in headlines: on both channels, politics and economy occupy a large proportion of topics in headlines whereas socially less relevant topics only play a minor role.

With respect to commercial ownership, there is a consistent pattern in many countries: in Belgium, Canada, Italy, Poland, and USA, the respective public channel puts news on politics and economy more frequently in the headlines than the commercial channel. Conversely, the respective commercial channel in these countries gives more prominence to news of less social relevance than the public channel. However, the commercial channels ITA_Canale5,

POL_TVN, USA_NBC, and ISR_Arutz2 all give high prominence to politics and economy and little attention to socially less important topics in their newscasts' headlines. Thus, commercial ownership seems not to play as important a role in this analysis as in the analyses on airtime devoted to different news topics. All in all, the analysis of topics in headlines confirms in part the results of the previous analyses: high news performance can be mostly attributed to public ownership, whereas low news performance can be traced back to economic factors on both system and channel level.

5.2 Economic influences on diversity in TV-news

Research questions RQ2a to RQ2f ask which channel characteristics and market environment are associated with high news diversity and which ones lead to low news diversity. In the following, I will present results of separate analyses on economic influences on topic diversity, actor diversity, and news diversity regarding domestic or foreign news.

5.2.1 Topic diversity

Diversity in topic coverage is measured by the relative entropy index, as discussed in Chapter 4.2.2. The frequency distribution of airtime devoted to the ten topic categories (Table 9) is now used to calculate the topic diversity of the newscasts in the sample. Table 19 shows the relative entropy values for each channel. Column two indicates the arithmetic means of unweighted relative entropy values, i.e. these values are directly calculated from the frequencies of the ten topics. Column three shows the means of normatively weighted entropy values. Here, the amount of airtime devoted to socially relevant topics is assigned a greater weight than airtime for less relevant topics.

Two patterns emerge from the unweighted relative entropy values. First, all entropy values are relatively high; except for the U.S. public channel PBS (.44), all other channels reach entropy index values between .60 and .86, with eight channels with values higher than .80. These values are higher than the results in the study by Köster and Wolling (2006) although this analysis is modelled upon that study.⁷⁶ One possible explanation for these divergent

⁷⁶ Köster and Wolling analyzed diversity of the newscast of four European public service channels (ARD, BBC, ORF1 and SF) and found relative entropy values from .49 (ARD) to .58 (SF) (2006, p.88).

findings might be that in the present study, one news item can be coded with up to three different topics. If this is the case, then the length of the respective news item is divided by the number of topics coded so that each topic category is assigned its proportion of airtime. Thus, the airtime is more evenly distributed across the ten topic categories than can be expected if only one topic is coded for each news item (which is probably the case in the study by Köster and Wolling).

Table 19: Relative entropy index values regarding topic coverage

TV-Channel	Average relative entropy (unweighted)	Average relative entropy (weighted)	Average number of topics in a newscast	Newscasts
BEL_VRT	.81	.84	8.9	28
BEL_VTM	.86	.86	9.2	28
CDN_CBC	.71	.73	8.1	28
CDN_CTV	.72	.73	7.3	28
CHI_TVN	.82	.83	8.8	28
CHI_Mega	.86	.86	9.4	28
GER_ARD	.65	.70	6.7	28
GER_RTL	.86	.86	8.9	28
ISR_IBA	.65	.70	7.4	27
ISR_Arutz2	.72	.77	8.3	28
ITA_RAI1	.76	.82	8.4	28
ITA_Canale5	.81	.83	8.7	28
POL_TVP1	.64	.67	5.9	28
POL_TVN	.69	.70	6.4	28
POR_RTP	.78	.81	8.5	28
POR_TVI	.81	.83	8.5	28
SUI_SF	.76	.80	8.1	28
SUI_TSR	.80	.84	8.6	28
TPE_PTS	.69	.71	6.8	28
TPE_TVBS	.70	.71	7.0	28
USA_PBS	.44	.46	5.0	20
USA_NBC	.60	.65	6.2	27
Total	.74	.76	7.8	606

The information contained in column four – the average number of topic categories covered in each newscast – supports this explanation for the high relative entropy values. On total average, almost eight topic categories are covered in an average newscast. As minimum

entropy is given when only a single category is covered in the whole newscast, it can be expected that relative entropy values are already substantially higher than 0 – relatively independent of the actual distribution.⁷⁷ The channel USA_PBS is a good illustration: its coverage of the first three topic categories – politics, economy and social issues – already takes up 88% of the total airtime, leaving only 12% left for the remaining seven categories. Despite this very strong focus on just three topic categories and only five topic categories covered per newscast on average, PBS still reaches an entropy value of .44.

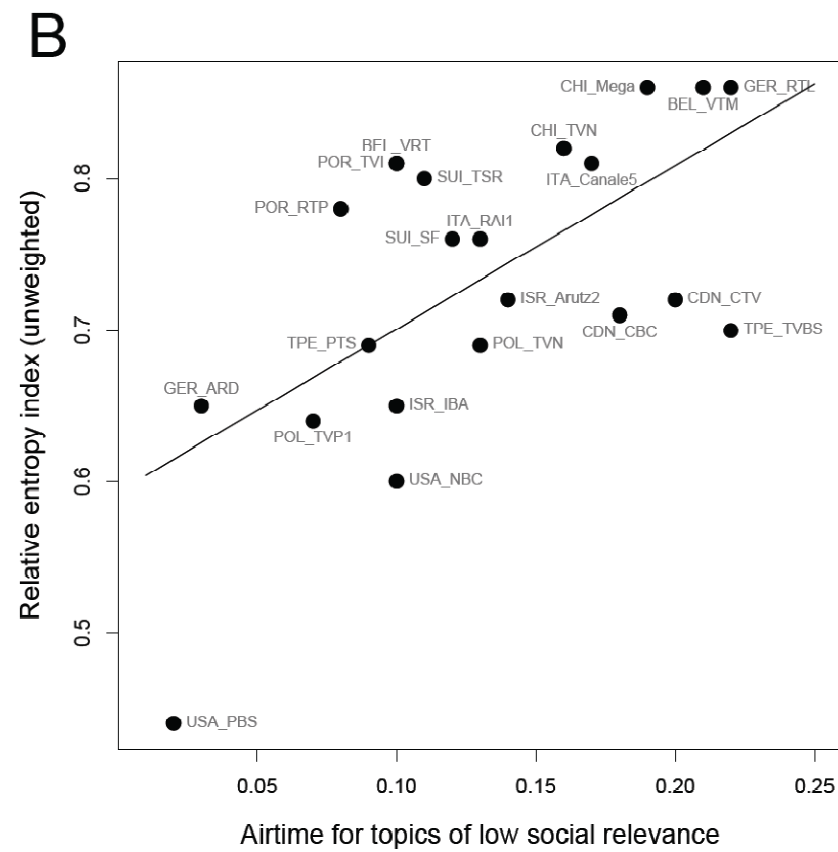
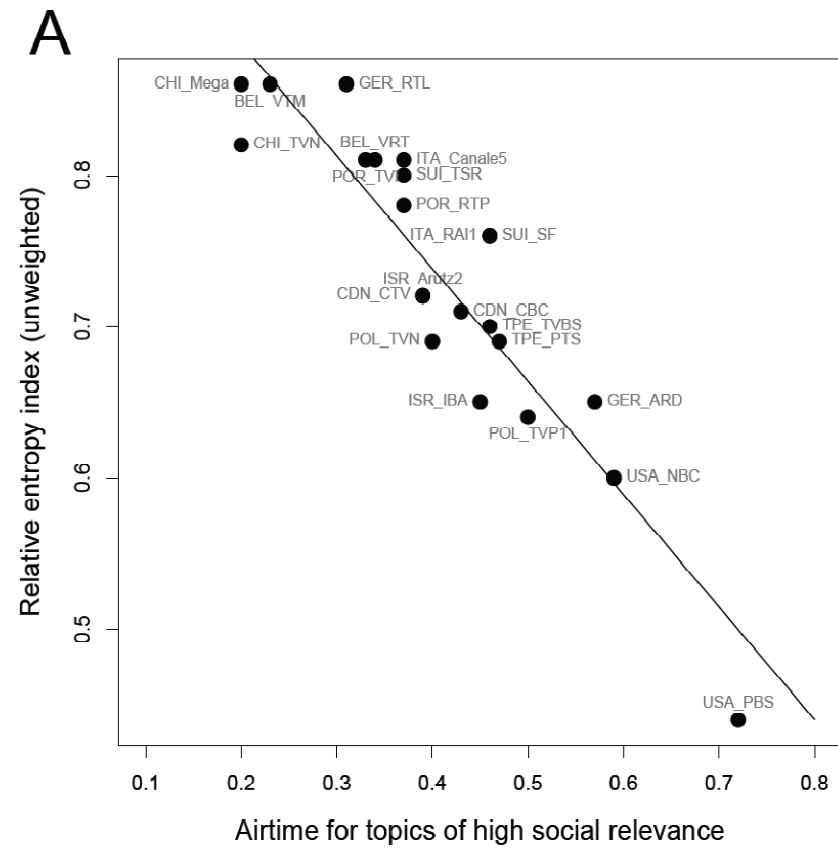
Second, the findings in Table 19 indicate a strong negative relationship between news diversity and high news performance regarding relevance in reporting as determined in the previous analyses. TV channels with the lowest diversity as measured by the relative entropy index are also channels that cover socially relevant topics the most and less relevant topics the least, e.g. USA_PBS, USA_NBC, POL_TVP1, ISA_IBA, GER_ARD, and TPE_PTS. In contrast, TV channels with the highest diversity scores are channels that devote the comparatively highest amount of airtime to socially less relevant topics, e.g. GER_RTL, BEL_VTM, CHI_Mega, CHI_TVN, and ITA_Canale5. A correlation analysis confirms this impression: there is indeed a strong negative and highly significant correlation between the amount of airtime dedicated to politics and economy and the relative entropy index per newscast (Pearson correlation: $r = -.67$; $p \leq .001$; $n = 606$). In other words, the more a TV channel covers socially most relevant topics, the less diverse is its newscast. The Pearson correlation between the relative entropy index and the amount of airtime devoted to crime and violence, human interest, accidents and disasters is not as pronounced, but also substantive and highly significant ($r = .42$; $p \leq .001$; $n = 606$). Figure 8 illustrates these two correlations on a channel level; on this aggregate level,⁷⁸ the correlation coefficients are even much higher ($r = -.90$; $p \leq .001$ and $r = .61$; $p \leq .001$; $n = 22$).

This finding could be expected because topic diversity as measured by the (unweighted) relative entropy is highest when all topic categories receive a comparable amount of airtime.

⁷⁷ In fact, the number of topics covered in a newscast and the relative entropy of the respective newscast is strongly positively correlated ($r = .83$; $p \leq .001$; $n = 606$), regardless of the proportions of airtime for each topic.

⁷⁸ On channel level, the correlation analysis is carried out on the arithmetic means of relative entropy and percentages of airtime for relevant and less relevant topics of the TV channels.

Figure 8: Relationship between relative entropy regarding topic coverage and (A) coverage of topics of high social relevance and (B) coverage of topics of low social relevance



Conversely, this means that TV channels that pay a lot of attention to individual topics while neglecting others will reach only low diversity values. This is exactly the case with channels that devote a large amount of airtime to politics and economy – one operationalization of high news performance – and thus reach low entropy values, with USA_PBS being a case in point. Diversity can thus only be achieved at the expense of relevance. However, as Köster and Wolling (2006) pointed out, diversity is only a good operationalization of news performance if it is a diversity of relevant topics. Therefore, I adopt the authors' idea of calculating a normatively weighted relative entropy index, but assigned slightly different weights to the ten topic categories. Airtime devoted to politics and economy is weighted by factor three, airtime dedicated to social issues, culture, environment and science, internal order, and sports by factor two, and airtime devoted to crime and violence, fashion and human interest, and accidents and disasters is weighted by factor one.⁷⁹ This weighting procedure indicates that within a newscast that is both diverse and relevant, the amount of airtime for socially relevant topics should be three times as high as the amount of airtime for less relevant topics. The choice of the weight factors is of course disputable, but it is nevertheless important to provide transparency of the procedure.

Column three in Table 19 shows the average normatively weighted relative entropy values, which do not differ substantially from the unweighted values. For almost all channels, the normatively weighted entropy values are slightly higher than the unweighted values, but these increases of 0.01 to 0.05 are rather small and thus negligible. Hence, even with the normatively weighted relative entropy index, there is a strong negative relationship⁸⁰ between news diversity and high news performance regarding relevance in reporting as

⁷⁹ The weighted relative entropy index is calculated as follows: first, the airtime dedicated to each category per newscast is divided by the weight factor; the resulting airtimes are then summed to obtain the normalized length of the respective newscast. The weighted proportion of each category is obtained by dividing the weighted airtime by the normalized newscast length. Subsequently, these proportions are used to calculate the weighted relative entropy by the formula given in Chapter 4.2.

⁸⁰ The Pearson-correlation between the weighted relative entropy and the proportion of airtime devoted to socially most relevant topics per newscast is $r = -.52$ ($p \leq .001$; $n = 606$) and the respective correlation for socially less relevant topics is $r = .27$ ($p \leq .001$; $n = 606$).

measured via the amount of airtime devoted to topics of high and low social relevance.⁸¹

Before I conduct a QCA to identify channels characteristics and market environment associated with high or low topic diversity (RQ2a and RQ2b), I will first present descriptive results on news diversity regarding actor representation in TV news.

5.2.2 Actor diversity

Research question RQ2c and RQ2d ask which channel characteristics and market environment play a role in the diversity of viewpoints and interests presented in TV news. Table 20 shows the average proportions of speaking time TV news editors allot to the seven groups of actors out of the total speaking time for all actors in each newscast. On total average, actors in the topic areas politics and economy are most frequently represented in their own voice in TV news – a not unexpected finding that corroborates the overall prevalence of these topic categories. Another expected finding refers to the fact that high status actors in these topic areas are assigned slightly more airtime to appear in the news than middle and low status actors (25% vs. 19%). Actors from topic areas with medium social relevance – social issues, culture, environment and science, and internal order – are also granted relatively many opportunities to express their views in TV news. However, middle and low status actors in these topic categories appear much more frequently in the news than high status actors (22% vs. 9%); this difference is particularly large on both U.S. channels. It can only be speculated about the reasons for this pronounced difference; a potential explanation could be that middle and low status actors in these areas might be more accessible to journalists than high status actors. In contrast, there is no difference in the presence between high status and middle and low status actors in sports and human interest themes in TV news, both actor groups are granted very limited opportunities to speak in the news (4% and 3%). Overall, citizens and members of the public play a relatively important role in TV news: almost one fifth of speaking time granted to all actors (18%) is

⁸¹ The same result was obtained in a tentative analysis of actor diversity using the same weighting procedure. Normatively weighted relative entropy for actor diversity (i.e. high status actors from topic areas with high social relevance should be granted the highest amount of speaking time and low status actors from topic areas with low social relevance should be granted a small amount of speaking time) is also only slightly higher than the unweighted relative entropy. Therefore, I will not calculate the normatively weighted relative entropy for actor diversity.

Table 20: Percentage of speaking time for actor groups (average per newscast)

TV-Channel	High status actors in politics and economy	Low status actors in politics and economy	High status actors in social issues, culture etc.	Low status actors in social issues, culture etc.	High status actors in sports and human interest	Low status actors in sports and human interest	Members of the public	Newscasts
BEL_VRT	19%	20%	10%	25%	7%	3%	16%	28
BEL_VTM	11%	19%	12%	29%	5%	3%	22%	28
CDN_CBC	18%	16%	12%	31%	1%	1%	22%	28
CDN_CTV	24%	18%	10%	15%	4%	3%	26%	28
CHI_TVN	19%	11%	7%	21%	11%	8%	23%	28
CHI_Mega	21%	13%	5%	20%	10%	9%	22%	28
GER_ARD	48%	27%	7%	9%	1%	3%	5%	28
GER_RTL	12%	21%	4%	27%	7%	7%	22%	28
ISR_IBA	22%	15%	12%	19%	2%	1%	30%	27
ISR_Arutz2	25%	12%	9%	21%	3%	1%	28%	28
ITA_RAI1	35%	13%	8%	22%	3%	2%	17%	28
ITA_Canale5	35%	13%	8%	20%	3%	2%	20%	28
POL_TVP1	22%	23%	9%	26%	2%	1%	16%	28
POL_TVN	20%	24%	4%	26%	3%	1%	21%	28
POR_RTP	34%	16%	10%	13%	7%	2%	18%	28
POR_TVI	25%	17%	7%	21%	9%	4%	17%	28
SUI_SF	42%	20%	11%	17%	3%	4%	4%	28
SUI_TSR	21%	19%	13%	26%	3%	3%	15%	28
TPE PTS	20%	29%	12%	22%	1%	1%	16%	28
TPE_TVBS	13%	36%	6%	14%	2%	6%	22%	28
USA_PBS	24%	22%	9%	43%	0.4%	0.2%	1%	20
USA_NBC	29%	13%	6%	36%	2%	1%	13%	27
Total	25%	19%	9%	22%	4%	3%	18%	606

allotted to people affected by news events, for example survivors or victims of some event or the proverbial man on the street.

Two TV channels differ strongly from this general pattern: in the newscasts of the German public channel ARD and the Swiss German-language public channel SF, a large amount of airtime is granted to actors in politics and economy (particularly to high status actors), mostly at the expense of the speaking time of citizens and members of the public. In Italy, Taiwan and the USA – countries with ongoing elections during the time of the content analysis – actors in politics and economy are also given comparatively many opportunities to express their views in TV news. Among TV channels in whose newscasts actors in politics and economy appear least frequently are both channels in Chile and Israel, the commercial channels BEL_VTM and GER RTL and the Canadian public channel CBC. Both Chilean channels and the German commercial channel RTL also allot a well above average amount of airtime to actors in sports and human interest topics (14% to 20% for both high status and middle and low status actors).

5.2.3 QCA results for topic and actor diversity

Research questions RQ2a to RQ2d ask which economic influences lead to high diversity regarding topic coverage and actor representation in TV news. In order to answer these research questions, four QCAs are conducted with topic diversity and actor diversity as the respective outcome. Table 21 shows the (unweighted) relative entropy index values regarding topic coverage⁸² and actor representation for each TV channel. The results indicate a positive correlation between the two measures of diversity: TV channel with diverse topic coverage also achieve higher relative entropy values regarding actor representation in their newscast and vice versa. The positive Pearson-correlation on newscast level is moderate in magnitude ($r = .45$; $p \leq .001$; $n = 606$) but highly significant. This finding is not unexpected, as the speaking time allotted to actors from specific topic areas depend directly on the airtime TV channels devote to the coverage of the respective topics. This pattern is most visible for the U.S. channels PBS and NCB and the German public channel ARD; all three channels devote a substantial amount of airtime to coverage of

⁸² The relative entropy index values for topic coverage have already been shown in Table 19 and are repeated here only for illustration purposes.

politics and economy and thus achieve low relative entropy values for both topic and actor diversity. On the other end of the scale, TV channels in Belgium, Chile, and Portugal as well as the Germany commercial channel RTL – channels with very low or just average level of coverage of politics and economy – all achieve high or at least above average relative entropy values for both diversity measures.

The relative entropy index values are used to determine membership score for each TV channel in the sets of channels with “high topic diversity” and “high actor diversity”. For both sets, full membership is assigned to TV channels with relative entropy values higher than .85; full non-membership to channels with values lower than .60; the cross-over point is set at .75.

Table 21: Relative entropy values and membership scores for topic and actor diversity

TV-Channel	Topic diversity: Average relative entropy	Membership in "High topic diversity"	Actor diversity: Average relative entropy	Membership in "High actor diversity"	Newscasts (N)
BEL_VRT	0.81	0.7	0.84	0.7	28
BEL_VTM	0.86	1	0.82	0.7	28
CDN_CBC	0.71	0.3	0.67	0.3	28
CDN_CTV	0.72	0.3	0.73	0.3	28
CHI_TVN	0.82	0.7	0.86	1	28
CHI_Mega	0.86	1	0.86	1	28
GER_ARD	0.65	0.3	0.56	0	28
GER_RTL	0.86	1	0.78	0.7	28
ISR_IBA	0.65	0.3	0.72	0.3	27
ISR_Arutz2	0.72	0.3	0.74	0.3	28
ITA_RAI1	0.76	0.7	0.71	0.3	28
ITA_Canale5	0.81	0.7	0.71	0.3	28
POL_TVP1	0.64	0.3	0.76	0.7	28
POL_TVN	0.69	0.3	0.77	0.7	28
POR_RTP	0.78	0.7	0.77	0.7	28
POR_TVI	0.81	0.7	0.80	0.7	28
SUI_SF	0.76	0.7	0.67	0.3	28
SUI_TSR	0.80	0.7	0.77	0.7	28
TPE_PTS	0.69	0.3	0.76	0.7	28
TPE_TVBS	0.70	0.3	0.77	0.7	28
USA_PBS	0.44	0	0.50	0	20
USA_NBC	0.60	0	0.66	0.3	27
Total	0.74	-	0.74	-	606

Table 22 and Table 23 show the intermediate QCA solutions for high topic diversity and low topic diversity, respectively. In both solutions, the first causal recipe explains topic diversity by the market environment TV channels operate in. The high topic diversity by TV channels in Belgium, Portugal and Switzerland is explained by their competitive market environment in which PSB channels have a strong position. The comparatively low topic diversity found for TV channels in Canada, Israel, Taiwan and the USA is accounted for by a commercialized market environment characterized by strong competition, high ad-dependency within the TV system and a weak PSB presence. The presence of strong competition in both causal recipes again makes clear the need to conduct a separate QCA for the outcome (here high topic diversity) and one for the negation of the outcome (here low topic diversity).

Causal recipe two in Table 22 and causal recipe two in Table 23 both refer to public service channels; however, some of these channels have more diverse topic coverage (CHI_TVNI, ITA_RAI1, POR_RTP) whereas others display a relatively low topic diversity (POL_TVP1, GER_ARD). These contradicting results indicate that these two causal recipes are not well interpretable as causal combinations explaining topic diversity. This can also be seen by the fact that the channels ITA_RAI1 and POL_TVP1 are covered by both causal recipes⁸³ but display very different levels of topic diversity. The remaining causal recipes are quite specific causal combinations of channel characteristics and market environment and thus do not have large empirical relevance. Causal recipe three in Table 22 refers only to the German commercial channel GER_RTL and causal recipe three in Table 23 explains low topic diversity only for two channels (ISR_IBA, USA_PBS).

All in all, the research questions about which economic factors lead to high news diversity regarding topic coverage (RQ2a and RQ2b) can only be answered tentatively. There is some indication that a commercialized environment leads to low topic diversity (causal recipes one and three in Table 23). Market competition, however, also leads to high topic diversity but only in market with a strong PSB presence (Belgium, Portugal and Switzerland). Channel characteristics do not play any role in explaining news diversity regarding topic coverage.

⁸³ ITA_RAI1 is a public service channel with high market research activity and POL_TVP1 is a public service channel deriving a substantial amount of revenue from advertising. As ITA_RAI1 displays relatively high topic diversity, it is not shown in Table 23 and POL_TVP1 is not shown in Table 22 because of its low topic diversity.

Table 22: QCA intermediate solution for high topic diversity

Causal recipe	Strong market competition	Strong ad-dependency (TV system)	Weak PSB position	Commercial ownership	High market research activity	Strong ad-dependency (TV channel)	Raw coverage	Unique coverage	Consistency	TV channels in the causal recipe
1	✓		✗				0.56	0.26	0.95	BEL_VRT, BEL_VTM, POR_RTP, POR_TVI, SUI_SF, SUI_TSR
2				✗		✓	0.45	0.18	0.77	CHI_TVN, ITA_RAI1, POR_RTP
3	✗		✗	✓			0.09	0.04	1	GER_RTL

Table 23: QCA intermediate solution for low topic diversity

Causal recipe	Strong market competition	Strong ad-dependency (TV system)	Weak PSB position	Commercial ownership	High market research activity	Strong ad-dependency (TV channel)	Raw coverage	Unique coverage	Consistency	TV channels in the causal recipe
1	✓	✓	✓				0.66	0.36	0.87	CDN_CBC, CDN_CTV, ISR_IBA, ISR_Arutz2, TPE_PTS, TPE_TVBS, USA_PBS, USA_NBC
2	✗			✗	✓		0.33	0.10	0.78	POL_TVP1, GER_ARD
3	✓	✓			✓	✗	0.36	0.03	0.90	ISR_IBA, USA_PBS

Table 24: QCA intermediate solution for high actor diversity

Causal recipe	Strong market competition	Strong ad-dependency (TV system)	Weak PSB position	Commercial ownership	High market research activity	Strong ad-dependency (TV channel)	Raw coverage	Unique coverage	Consistency	TV channels in the causal recipe
1					x		0.15	0.15	0.85	TPE_PTS, TPE_TVBS
2	✓	✓	x				0.43	0.35	0.94	BEL_VRT, BEL_VTM, POR_RTP, POR_TVI
3	x	x	x			✓	0.11	0	0.81	GER_RTL
4	x	x	x	✓			0.06	0	1	GER_RTL

Table 25: QCA intermediate solution for low actor diversity

Causal recipe	Strong market competition	Strong ad-dependency (TV system)	Weak PSB position	Commercial ownership	High market research activity	Strong ad-dependency (TV channel)	Raw coverage	Unique coverage	Consistency	TV channels in the causal recipe
1					✓	x	0.49	0.49	0.83	ISR_IBA, USA_PBS, GER_ARD, SUI_SF
2	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		0.22	0.22	0.77	CDN_CTV, USA_NBC

Research questions on economic influences on news diversity concerning actor representation (RQ2c and RQ2d) cannot be answered fully by the data at hand, either. The QCA results for high and low actor diversity (Table 24 and Table 25) apply to only twelve out of the twenty-two TV channels in the sample. The causal recipes explaining high actor diversity are somewhat similar to that explaining high topic diversity: the high actor diversity by TV channels in Belgium and Portugal is again explained by a market environment characterized by strong competition and strong PSB presence, but also by a high ad-dependency within the TV system. Also similar to the QCA on high topic diversity, the German commercial channel's high actor diversity is explained by very specific causal combinations that apply only to this channel (causal recipes three and four in Table 24). The first causal recipe in the QCA for high actor diversity can be disregarded, as it covers only the two the Taiwanese channels and explains their high actor diversity by their low market research activities. Low actor diversity is found for public channels with high research market activity that do not derive large proportions of revenue from advertising (ISR_IBA, USA_PBS, GER_ARD, SUI_SF) and also for commercial channels operating in a highly commercialized environment (CDN_CTV, USA_NBC).

All things considered, the research questions about which economic factors exert an influence on news diversity regarding topic coverage and actor representation cannot be fully answered. The causal combinations identified in the QCAs consist both of the presence and absence of economic factors, indicating that it is quite specific circumstances in which TV channels display high or low news diversity that are not necessarily associated with commercialization processes. The findings are too heterogeneous and thus do not allow any firm conclusion about whether TV channels operating in a commercialized environment and facing economic pressures from within their organizations tend to show topic and actor diversity or not.

5.2.4 Diversity in foreign news

The notoriously low level of foreign news coverage on American TV networks (Curran et al., 2009; Hoge, 1997; Iyengar et al., 2009; Norris, 1995; Schudson & Tifft, 2005) has repeatedly been traced back to their market-driven and ratings-conscious program strategies. In order to investigate whether market-driven journalism also leads to lower foreign news coverage

Table 26: Coverage of domestic and foreign news

TV-Channel	Domestic News	Domestic news with foreign involvement	Both domestic news categories	Foreign news with domestic involvement	Foreign News	Both foreign news categories	Membership in "high foreign news coverage"
BEL_VRT	40%	19%	58%	16%	26%	42%	1
BEL_VTM	54%	18%	73%	11%	16%	27%	0.7
CDN_CBC	30%	36%	66%	16%	18%	34%	0.7
CDN_CTV	35%	22%	57%	15%	27%	43%	1
CHI_TVN	51%	25%	76%	15%	9%	24%	0.3
CHI_Mega	54%	23%	77%	15%	8%	23%	0.3
GER_ARD	37%	21%	58%	15%	27%	42%	1
GER_RTL	36%	23%	59%	19%	22%	41%	1
ISR_IBA	57%	19%	75%	14%	10%	25%	0.3
ISR_Arutz2	53%	16%	69%	15%	16%	31%	0.7
ITA_RAI1	67%	11%	79%	8%	13%	21%	0.3
ITA_Canale5	69%	14%	84%	7%	9%	16%	0
POL_TVP1	47%	19%	66%	18%	15%	34%	0.7
POL_TVN	54%	18%	72%	15%	13%	28%	0.7
POR_RTP	65%	4%	70%	11%	19%	30%	0.7
POR_TVI	71%	7%	78%	7%	15%	22%	0.3
SUI_SF	31%	20%	52%	10%	38%	48%	1
SUI_TSR	40%	16%	57%	11%	31%	43%	1
TPE PTS	76%	5%	81%	3%	17%	19%	0
TPE_TVBS	89%	3%	92%	1%	7%	8%	0
USA_PBS	69%	10%	79%	16%	6%	21%	0.3
USA_NBC	78%	4%	82%	11%	7%	18%	0
Total	57%	15%	72%	11%	16%	28%	-

in other settings, I investigate which channel characteristics and market environment lead to low news diversity with respect to foreign news (RQ2e and RQ2f). Table 26 shows the average proportion of airtime the twenty-two TV channels in the sample dedicate to different types of news: “purely” domestic news, domestic news with foreign involvement, foreign news with domestic involvement and “purely” foreign news. For the sake of clarity, column four and seven contain the combined percentages for both domestic and both foreign news categories. Overall, domestic news dominates TV news. Across all channels, more than two-thirds of the total airtime is devoted to coverage of news events taking place in the country of broadcast; events taking place in foreign countries are covered in less than one-third of the total airtime. However, there are substantial differences between countries and channels. Both TV channels in Switzerland, Germany, and Canada as well as the public channels in Belgium and Poland BEL_VRT and POL_TVP1 stand out with an above average proportion of airtime for foreign news (34% to 48%). In contrast, TV channels in Italy, Taiwan and the USA cover domestic news extensively (79% to 92%) and devote only up to one fifth of their airtime to foreign news (8% to 21%) – a finding that can well be explained by the fact that there were elections taking place in these three countries during the time of the content analysis, although the low level of foreign news coverage on U.S. networks is a well known phenomenon as noted above. All in all, it seems that the amount of attention paid to foreign news is relatively comparable between channels within one country: except for Belgium, Canada, Portugal and Taiwan, the respective two channels in all other countries differ only up to 6% in their amount of coverage of domestic and foreign news.

A QCA is conducted to identify economic factors associated with high or low coverage of foreign news. The last column in Table 26 shows the membership score in the set of channels with “high coverage of foreign news”: full membership is assigned to TV channels with more than 40% of the airtime devoted to foreign news, full non-membership is assigned to channels with less than 20% and the cross-over point is set at 30%. The QCA intermediate solutions for high and low foreign news coverage are shown in Table 27 and Table 28. Similar to the analysis of coverage of socially relevant topics, public ownership seems to be the most important channel characteristics associated with a large amount of airtime for foreign news. The first and second causal recipes in Table 27 point out the

Table 27: QCA intermediate solution for high foreign news coverage

Causal recipe	Strong market competition	Strong ad-dependency (TV system)	Weak PSB position	Commercial ownership	High market research activity	Strong ad-dependency (TV channel)	Raw coverage	Unique coverage	Consistency	TV channels in the causal recipe
1			×	×			0.54	0.16	0.86	BEL_VRT, GER_ARD, POL_TVP1, POR_RTP, SUI_SF, SUI_TSR
2				×		✓	0.46	0.13	0.79	CDN_CBC, ISR_Arutz2, POL_TVP1, POR_RTP
3	×	×	×				0.18	0.06	1	GER_ARD, GER_RTL

Table 28: QCA intermediate solution for low foreign news coverage

Causal recipe	Strong market competition	Strong ad-dependency (TV system)	Weak PSB position	Commercial ownership	High market research activity	Strong ad-dependency (TV channel)	Raw coverage	Unique coverage	Consistency	TV channels in the causal recipe
1	✓	✓	✓			×	0.25	0.25	0.82	ISR_IBA, TPE_PTS, USA_PBS
2	✓	✓	✓	✓			0.25	0.04	0.79	CHI_Mega, TPE_TVBS, USA_NBC
3		✓		✓	✓	✓	0.50	0.29	0.77	ITA_Canale5, POL_TVN, POR_TV1, USA_NBC, BEL_VTM, CHI_Mega

association between public ownership and high foreign news coverage. The first recipe points to public channels in European countries in which PSB channels have a strong position on the market (BEL_VRT, GER_ARD, POL_TVP1, POR_RTP, SUI_SF, SUI_TSR); the second recipe indicates that for some public channels, advertising dependency does not prevent a strong focus on coverage of foreign news (CND_CBC, POL_TVP1, POR_RTP).⁸⁴ Again, the Israeli channel Arutz2 stands out as being rather comparable to public service channels than commercial channel in other countries. The third causal recipe suggests that the rather low commercialized market environment in Germany is a sufficient explanation for both German channels' high level of foreign news coverage.

The QCA results for low foreign news coverage (Table 28) suggest that a commercialized market environment leads to less attention to foreign news: two out of three causal recipes contain all system level factors. TV channels in the first causal recipe (ISR_IBA, TPE_PTS, and USA_PBS) are all public channels, but the commercialized environment in which these channels operate seems to have a greater weight in this regard than public ownership; all three channels display a quite low level of foreign news. The second and third causal recipes refer to commercial channels in Chile, Taiwan, USA, Italy, Portugal, and Belgium. Both causal recipes indicate that commercial channels in a commercialized market environment devote very little airtime to foreign news coverage⁸⁵ – a finding very similar to the pattern observed for U.S. television networks. Research questions RQ2e and RQ2f thus can be answered similarly to the QCA results of coverage of socially relevant and less relevant topics: high level of foreign news coverage is mainly traced back to public ownership whereas low level of foreign news coverage is explained by combinations of system and channel characteristics. However, it seems that a commercialized market environment exerts a greater influence than channel characteristics.

News diversity with respect to foreign news refers not only to the amount of airtime devoted to international news, but also to country diversity, i.e. how many countries are

⁸⁴ The Italian public channel RAI1 exhibits the combinations of causal conditions in both recipes, but devotes only little airtime to foreign news and is thus a contradicting case. The same applies to the Chilean public channel TVN in the second causal recipe.

⁸⁵ The Canadian commercial channel CTV is an exception that does not fit in with this argument.

covered and whether foreign news coverage concentrates on a few important countries at the expense of others. Again, the USA serves as the negative model in this regard: maintaining foreign news bureaus is expensive and not necessarily rewarded by the audience and therefore, the U.S. networks have closed a significant number of foreign news bureaus in the post-Cold War era (PEJ, 2009). Furthermore, the sharply reduced foreign news coverage concentrates mostly on countries with U.S. engagement such as Iraq or Afghanistan.

Table 29 shows the results for this aspect of news diversity: column two contains the number of countries covered in the respective TV channel's newscast,⁸⁶ column three and four the Country Concentration Index for the most frequently mentioned five and ten countries, respectively (CCI, see Chapter 4.2.2), and column five to seven the three most frequently mentioned countries and their relative frequency of mentioning (in brackets). In accordance with the previous analysis, TV channels in Belgium, Switzerland and Germany show the highest diversity in foreign news. These channels not only have the widest range of countries covered, but also the comparatively lowest CCI values, i.e. the most frequently mentioned five and ten countries do not dominate their foreign news coverage as much as on the other channels in the sample. On the other end of the scale, both U.S. channels and the commercial channels in Taiwan (TVBS) and Poland (TVN) stand out with only up to 35 countries covered in foreign news and rather strong focus on the five most frequently mentioned countries. In the case of TPE_TVBS, there are only 18 countries in foreign news and the coverage is extremely concentrated on a few countries. Another pattern also emerges from the results in Table 29. In many countries in the sample, the public channels display higher diversity in foreign news than their commercial counterpart; their range of foreign countries covered is higher and the concentration on the most important countries is lower. This pattern is most pronounced in Belgium, Canada, Portugal, and Taiwan.

The findings also confirm the news geography found in other studies: news centres (usually the country of broadcast and powerful countries like the USA, the United Kingdom, France, Russia, Germany) and news neighbours (other countries frequently covered) dominate

⁸⁶ This analysis takes only news events taking place in countries other than the country of broadcast into account (i.e. foreign news with domestic involvement and "purely" foreign news).

Table 29: Country diversity in foreign news

TV-Channel	Countries in foreign news*	CCI (5)	CCI (10)	Three most frequently mentioned countries*			Membership in "high diversity in foreign news"
BEL_VRT	82	39%	58%	United States (14%)	France (10%)	United Kingdom (6%)	1
BEL_VTM	64	46%	61%	United States (17%)	France (10%)	United Kingdom (9%)	0.7
CDN_CBC	57	54%	68%	United States (33%)	United Kingdom (7%)	Israel (6%)	0.3
CDN_CTV	45	62%	75%	United States (42%)	United Kingdom (8%)	Israel (5%)	0
CHI_TVN	55	44%	67%	Argentina (12%)	Spain (10%)	United States (9%)	0.7
CHI_Mega	47	47%	70%	Argentina (13%)	United States (12%)	Spain (9%)	0.3
GER_ARD	65	35%	52%	United States (14%)	France (6%)	Russia (6%)	1
GER_RTL	60	38%	57%	United States (17%)	United Kingdom (8%)	Spain (5%)	1
ISR_IBA	41	53%	73%	Palestine (17%)	United States (16%)	Egypt (8%)	0.3
ISR_Arutz2	58	55%	69%	United States (25%)	Palestine (14%)	United Kingdom (6%)	0.3
ITA_RAI1	47	45%	66%	United States (21%)	Vatican City (6%)	Israel (6%)/Palestine (6%)	0.7
ITA_Canal5	45	47%	66%	United States (19%)	France (9%)	Vatican City (7%)	0.7
POL_TVP1	44	48%	65%	Russia (16%)	United States (14%)	Ukraine (8%)	0.7
POL_TVN	35	58%	69%	United States (25%)	Russia (17%)	United Kingdom (7%)	0.3
POR_RTP	58	43%	59%	United States (14%)	Spain (12%)	East Timor (8%)	0.7
POR_TVI	45	49%	66%	Spain (15%)	United States (14%)	East Timor (8%)	0.7
SUI_SF	78	39%	59%	United States (13%)	France (7%)	Germany (7%)	1
SUI_TSR	69	42%	60%	United States (15%)	France (13%)	Germany (5%)	0.7
TPE_PTS	48	54%	70%	United States (30%)	China (10%)	South Korea (5%)	0.3
TPE_TVBS	18	80%	90%	United States (31%)	China (27%)	Hong Kong (16%)	0
USA_PBS	32	56%	76%	Iraq (28%)	Israel (10%)	Palestine (8%)	0
USA_NBC	29	50%	72%	Iraq (21%)	Israel (10%)	Palestine (9%)	0.3

Note: * The list of countries includes not only internationally recognized countries (192 members of the United Nations) but also autonomous regions (mostly overseas territories) and entities whose country status is not (widely) recognized (e.g. Kosovo, Palestine, Taiwan etc.). The entire list is in Appendix E.

television news. In contrast, coverage of topical news neighbours (countries covered mainly because they are involved in ongoing events and themes, e.g. Iraq, Kosovo) and news periphery is mainly event-driven (Kamps, 1998, 1999; Rössler, 2004). A quite interesting finding is that with respect to the most important three countries in foreign news, both TV channels in one country display a remarkable similarity: in six countries, the three most frequently mentioned countries are the same on both channels (Belgium, Canada, Chile, Portugal, Switzerland, and USA) and in four other countries, at least two countries of the top three are the same on both channels (Israel, Italy, Poland, and Taiwan). However, the focus on these countries might differ substantially between the public and commercial channels in each country, leading to different levels of diversity concerning countries in foreign news as measured by both country concentration indices.

A QCA is conducted to identify combinations of economic factors associated with high or low country diversity in foreign news. Column eight in Table 29 shows membership scores for each channel in the set of channels with “high country diversity in foreign news”. To determine membership in this set, I draw on the number of countries covered in foreign news and both country concentration indices. For each variable, a membership score is determined⁸⁷ and the final membership is obtained by averaging these three scores and rounding to the four membership scores 0, 0.3, 0.7 and 1. Table 30 and Table 31 show the QCA intermediate solutions for high and low diversity in foreign news; both solutions are interpretable and highly consistent.

⁸⁷ The membership scores for these three variables are determined as follows.

- Countries in foreign news: full membership is assigned to channels with more than 60 countries covered in foreign news, full non-membership is assigned to channels less than 40 countries and the cross-over point is set at 50 countries.
- CCI(5): full membership is assigned to channels with values lower than 40%, full non-membership to channels with values higher than 60% and the cross-over point is set at 50%
- CCI(10): full membership is assigned to channels with values lower than 60%, full non-membership to channels with values higher than 70% and the cross-over point is set at 67%.

As mentioned above, the calibration process for set membership is oriented on the empirical distribution with the cross-over point set roughly at the mean.

Table 30: QCA intermediate solution of high diversity regarding countries in foreign news

Causal recipe	Strong market competition	Strong ad-dependency (TV system)	Weak PSB position	Commercial ownership	High market research activity	Strong ad-dependency (TV channel)	Raw coverage	Unique coverage	Consistency	TV channels in the causal recipe
1		×	×				0.29	0.03	1	GER_ARD, GER_RTL, SUI_SF, SUI_TSR
2			×	×			0.55	0.12	0.91	BEL_VRT, GER_ARD, ITA_RAI1, POL_TVP1, POR_RTP, SUI_SF, SUI_TSR
3	✓		×				0.54	0.12	0.95	BEL_VRT, BEL_VTM, POR_RTP, POR_TVI, SUI_SF, SUI_TSR

Table 31: QCA intermediate solution of low diversity regarding countries in foreign news

Causal recipe	Strong market competition	Strong ad-dependency (TV system)	Weak PSB position	Commercial ownership	High market research activity	Strong ad-dependency (TV channel)	Raw coverage	Unique coverage	Consistency	TV channels in the causal recipe
1	✓	✓	✓				0.73	0.73	0.91	CDN_CBC, CDN_CTV, ISR_IBA, ISR_Arutz2, TPE_PTS, TPE_TVBS, USA_PBS, USA_NBC, CHI_Mega

Low diversity in foreign news can be clearly explained by a commercialized market environment: all three economic factors on media system level – strong competition, strong advertising dependency of the television system and weak PSB position – are contained in the only causal recipe in this QCA solution and all three factors characterize the market environment in Canada, Chile, Israel, Taiwan and USA. Except for the Chilean public channel TVN, all other channels in these countries display quite low diversity in foreign news, with TPE_TVBS and both U.S. channels being rather extreme cases. With respect to high diversity in foreign news, the relative strength of PSB channels on the market seems highly influential; in combination with a weak dependency on advertising within the broadcast system, this factor explains the high level of diversity in foreign news on both channels in Germany and Switzerland (causal recipe one in Table 30). This factor is also contained in the second recipe which explains the high country diversity on European public service channels (BEL_VRT, GER_ARD, ITA_RAI1, POL_TVP1, POR_RTP, SUI_SF, SUI_TSR). The third causal recipe in Table 30 covers TV channels in Belgium, Portugal, and Switzerland and indicates that TV channels operating on a competitive market with strong PSB channels all pursue the strategy of diversifying their foreign news; again, the presence of strong PSB channels seem to play an important role in this regard.

All in all, the QCA results indicate that the market environment plays a decisive role for the coverage of foreign countries. TV channels operating in competitive markets in which the TV system is financed to a high extent by advertising and PSB channels have a marginal position generally do not invest a lot of resources and efforts in diversity in foreign news. Regardless of their ownership structure, their coverage of foreign countries is restricted to a few countries, mostly internationally important states (e.g. the USA or the United Kingdom), neighbouring countries or countries with immediate relevance for the country of broadcast (e.g. coverage of Iraq on U.S. channels). On the other hand, the high diversity of foreign news on all European TV channels (except POL_TVNI) indicates that the presence of a strong public service broadcasting tradition exerts a great influence on the conduct of TV channels, regardless of the degree of competition or advertising dependency in these markets.

5.3 Economic influences on sensationalist reporting in TV news

Research questions RQ3a and RQ3b ask which channel characteristics and market environment make TV channels display a more sensationalist style of reporting in order to attract audience. As described in Chapter 4.2.3, sensationalist reporting is operationalized by three categories of sensational features: story subject, tabloid packaging and insertion of interviews with laypersons into the report. Table 32 shows the results for all three sensational features. On average, the twenty-two TV channels in the sample devote 10% of their airtime to cover sensational news topics such as murder, robbery, rape, accidents and disasters. Among TV channels with the lowest proportions of news items with sensational story subjects are mostly public service channels⁸⁸ (USA_PBS, TPE_PTS, GER_ARD, POL_TVP1, ISR_IBA with up to 8%). On the other hand, TV channels with the highest proportions of airtime for sensational news topics are all commercial channels (GER_RTL, CHI_Mega, BEL_VTM, POL_TVN, CDN_CTV) as well as the public channels in Canada (CBC) and Chile (TVN). Clear differences between public and commercial channel within one country can be found in Belgium, Chile, Germany, Poland, Taiwan, and USA. The commercial channels in these countries all devote more airtime to cover sensational topics than the respective public channel; the most pronounced difference exists between the German public broadcaster ARD and its commercial counterpart RTL (4% vs. 20%). In Canada and Chile, both public and commercial channels show above average proportions of airtime dedicated to sensational stories.

Concerning tabloid packaging, i.e. whether news stories are enlivened by features such as background music, slow or speeded up motion, gory visuals, extreme emotions etc., the results are similar. However, differences between public service and commercial channels are not as pronounced as in the previous analysis; country specific styles of reporting seem to play a more important role in this regard. This can be seen in the cases of TV channels in Belgium and Portugal in whose newscasts sensational features are used in very rare instances: only 4%-5% of all news stories are enlivened by tabloid packaging. On the other end of the scale, both Chilean channels stand out with a large number of news stories enhanced by sensational features (40% and 46%); the same applies to both Canadian

⁸⁸ except for the U.S. channel NBC

Table 32: Sensational features in TV news and membership scores in "high sensationalist reporting"

TV-Channel	Airtime devoted to sensational topics	News items with tabloid packaging	News items (N)*	Item has interviews with layperson	News items (N)**	Membership in "High sensationalist reporting"
BEL_VRT	9%	5%	774	27%	459	0.3
BEL_VTM	16%	4%	646	36%	471	0.7
CDN_CBC	14%	22%	406	43%	259	0.7
CDN_CTV	13%	17%	343	46%	190	0.7
CHI_TVN	13%	46%	709	40%	430	0.7
CHI_Mega	18%	40%	797	42%	497	1
GER_ARD	4%	6%	335	10%	157	0
GER_RTL	20%	42%	407	40%	207	1
ISR_IBA	8%	9%	548	43%	303	0.3
ISR_Arutz2	11%	20%	580	43%	318	0.7
ITA_RAI1	9%	13%	737	26%	440	0.3
ITA_Canal5	11%	13%	628	27%	343	0.3
POL_TVP1	8%	15%	279	46%	230	0.3
POL_TVN	14%	21%	261	54%	223	0.7
POR_RTP	9%	4%	841	28%	575	0.3
POR_TVI	11%	4%	866	25%	656	0.3
SUI_SF	10%	13%	489	9%	291	0.3
SUI_TSR	9%	14%	542	30%	321	0.3
TPE PTS	3%	4%	545	29%	479	0
TPE_TVBS	10%	14%	801	35%	715	0.7
USA_PBS	2%	16%	298	8%	130	0.3
USA_NBC	7%	30%	356	32%	194	0.7
Total	10%	16%	12188	33%	7888	-

Note: * Base: all news items; ** Base: news items in which at least one actor is shown speaking.

channels but on a much lower level (17% and 22%). Apart from these country specific results, the pattern observed above also applies to this analysis. Among TV channels whose news editors use tabloid packaging most often are commercial channels (GER_RTL, USA_NBC, POL_TVN, ISR_Arutz2) whereas tabloid packaging is fairly rare in public channels' newscasts (TPE PTS, GER_ARD, ISR_IBA). In Germany, Israel, Poland, Taiwan and the USA, journalists working for the commercial channel make more frequent use of sensational features in their news stories than their counterparts at the public channel. Again, the difference between the German public and commercial channel is striking (6% vs. 42%), confirming an earlier finding by Ruhrmann and colleagues who also found a higher level of sensationalist reporting in commercial channels' TV news than in news on public channels (Ruhrmann, Woelke, Maier, & Diehlmann, 2003). In Chile and Canada, it is the other way around: news stories on public channels are more often enhanced by tabloid packaging than on the respective commercial channel.

The third measure of sensationalist reporting refers to vivid storytelling which is operationalized by the frequency interviews with laypersons are inserted into the news story. Column five in Table 32 shows the percentages of news stories with interviews with laypersons for the twenty-two TV channels in the sample. Again, it seems that country specific reporting style exerts a large influence on whether or not this feature is used in news reports. TV channels in Portugal and Italy do not make use of this feature very often (25% to 28%), whereas TV channels in Poland, Canada, Israel, and Chile seem to frequently insert interviews with laypersons into their news stories (42% to 54%). However, apart from these country specific results, there is again the pattern of difference between public service and commercial channels. Among channels that make use of this feature least frequently are mostly public service channels (USA_PBS, SUI_SF, GER_ARD, BEL_VRT) and among channels with above average proportions of news stories with interviews with laypersons are mostly commercial channels (GER_RTL, BEL_VTM, TPE_TVBS). In Belgium, Germany, Poland, Taiwan, and the USA, the difference between the respective public service and commercial channels is clearly observable.

A QCA is conducted to identify economic influences associated with a high or low degree of sensationalist reporting. Membership scores in the set of TV-channels with "high sensationalist reporting" (last column five in Table 32) are determined as follows: for each

measure of sensationalist reporting, a membership score is determined for each TV-channel⁸⁹ and as in the previous analysis, the final membership is obtained by averaging these three scores and rounding to the four membership scores 0, 0.3, 0.7 and 1. Table 33 shows the QCA intermediate results for high degree of sensationalist reporting and Table 34 presents the results for low sensationalist reporting.

Causal combinations found to be sufficient for high sensationalist reporting are rather intricate but well supported by the empirical data. Similar to the QCA results for low coverage of socially relevant topics, causal conditions leading to high sensationalist reporting refer both to system and channel level. In general, commercial channels operating in a highly commercialized market environment with strong competition and high advertising dependency on a system level also display a high degree of sensationalism in TV news (BEL_VTM, CDN_CTV, CHI_Mega, ISR_Arutz2, TPE_TVBS, USA_NBC). In Canada and Chile, even the public service channels (CDN_CBC, CHI_TVN) show a level of sensationalist reporting comparable to their commercial counterparts. These two public service channels derive a significant amount of revenue from advertising and thus seem to react to pressures to attract audience by a sensationalist reporting in TV news. In contrast, public service channels in Belgium, Israel, Taiwan and the USA derive only a small amount or no revenue at all from advertising and thus seem to be able to resist these economic pressures. Interestingly, the German commercial channel RTL is again singled out in one causal recipe (causal recipe three in Table 33).

⁸⁹ The membership scores for the three sensationalist features are determined as follows.

- Story subject: full membership is assigned to TV channels that devote at least 15% of their airtime to cover sensational news topics; full non-membership to TV channels devoting less than 5% of their airtime to these topics; the cross-over point is set at 10%.
- Tabloid packaging: full membership is assigned to TV channels in whose newscast at least 25% of all news items have one or more sensational features; full non-membership to TV channels with less than 5% of news items displaying one or more sensational features; the cross-over point is set at 15%.
- Interviews with laypersons, TV channels that insert these interviews in more than 45% of news items are considered as full members; TV channels inserting these interviews in less than 15% of news items are considered full non-members; the cross-over point is set at 30%.

Again, the cross-over points are set roughly at the mean of the empirical distribution of each variable.

Table 33: QCA intermediate solution for high sensationalist reporting

Causal recipe	Strong market competition	Strong ad-dependency (TV system)	Weak PSB position	Commercial ownership	High market research activity	Strong ad-dependency (TV channel)	Raw coverage	Unique coverage	Consistency	TV channels in the causal recipe
1	✓	✓			✓	✓	0.72	0.38	0.87	BEL_VTM, CDN_CBC, CDN_CTV, CHI_TVN, CHI_Mega, ISR_Arutz2, USA_NBC
2	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	0.32	0.04	1	CDN_CTV, CHI_Mega, TPE_TVBS, USA_NBC
3		✗		✓	✓	✓	0.18	0.04	1	GER_RTL

Table 34: QCA intermediate solution for low sensationalist reporting

Causal recipe	Strong market competition	Strong ad-dependency (TV system)	Weak PSB position	Commercial ownership	High market research activity	Strong ad-dependency (TV channel)	Raw coverage	Unique coverage	Consistency	TV channels in the causal recipe
1			✗	✗			0.51	0.18	0.83	BEL_VRT, GER_ARD, ITA_RAI1, POL_TVP1, POR_RTP, SUI_SF, SUI_TSR
2				✗		✗	0.56	0.24	0.91	ISR_IBA, TPE_PTS, USA_PBS, BEL_VRT, GER_ARD, SUI_SF, SUI_TSR

With respect to low sensationalist reporting, the QCA results are again very similar to the analysis of coverage of politics and economy and of diversity in foreign news; public ownership seems to be the crucial factor here. Public service channels in European countries, i.e. in countries with a strong PSB presence in the market (causal recipe one in Table 34: BEL_VRT, GER_ARD, ITA_RA1, POL_TVP1, POR_RTP, SUI_SF, SUI_TSR) or public service channels that do not derive any revenues or significant proportions of revenues from advertising (causal recipe two in Table 34: ISR_IBA, TPE_PTS, USA_PBS, BEL_VRT, GER_ARD, SUI_SF, SUI_TSR) all display a low sensationalist style of reporting. Research questions RQ3a and RQ3b thus can be answered quite unambiguously. A low level of sensationalist reporting is again explained by public ownership and a market environment in which public service channels enjoy a strong position. Sensationalist reporting can be traced back to both channels characteristics and market environment. Commercial channels and public channels strongly dependent on advertising revenues that operate in a commercialized market environment seem to embrace sensationalist reporting as a strategy to attract audience.

6 Discussion

In the following, I will point out relevant cross-national patterns identified in the QCA results presented in the previous chapters. These patterns refer to causal associations between characteristics of TV channels and television systems on the one hand and different aspects of news performance on the other hand. Subsequently, I will discuss results for individual countries against the background of television markets in these countries in order to make the results found for the respective TV channels more interpretable.

6.1 Cross-national results

All things considered, the analyses show that high news performance is more easily explained than low news performance. In general, QCA solutions found for high news performance contain fewer and less intricate causal recipes than those found for low news performance, most notably in the analysis of coverage of socially less relevant topics, foreign news coverage and sensationalist reporting in TV news.

One causal combination seems particularly conducive to high news performance. In countries in which public service broadcasting still enjoys a strong position on the audience market, i.e. in all six European countries in the sample, the respective public broadcasters all pay little attention to topics such as crime, violence, human interest, accidents and disasters and also abstain from a sensationalist style of reporting. Four of these seven public channels – POL_TVP1, GER_ARD, ITA_RAI1, SUI_SF – also devote substantial amounts of airtime to cover the socially most relevant topics politics and economy (46% to 57%). The remaining channels – BEL_VRT, POR_RTP, SUI_TSR – fare slightly below average in this regard (34% to 37%), but still surpass their commercial competitors. European public broadcasters thus seem to refrain from covering topics considered as attractive to audiences but less socially relevant. They also abstain from a sensationalist reporting style more able to attract audience but less able to help citizens be better informed about current affairs and socially relevant events and issues. In contrast, European public broadcasters seem to do a good job at informing citizens in their countries about international affairs by assigning great importance to foreign news coverage and covering a wide range of different countries in their foreign news. These results support studies reporting that the high level of public

knowledge among European citizens can be traced back to European public service television's better coverage of public affairs and international news (Bonfadelli & Marr, 2008; Curran et al., 2009; Holtz-Bacha & Norris, 2001; Iyengar et al., 2009).

The television markets in the three small European countries in the sample, Belgium, Portugal and Switzerland, are characterized by strong competition⁹⁰ and a relatively strong position of public service channels in the audience market – a combination of market conditions identified in the QCAs as sufficient for high news diversity with regard to topic coverage and a wide range of countries covered in foreign news. In Belgium and Portugal, TV news on both channels analyzed also displays high diversity with respect to representation of different actor groups⁹¹ and low level of coverage of politics and economy.⁹² It seems that due to competitive pressures in these countries, public and commercial channels alike attempt to attract audience by offering topically diverse TV news at the expense of coverage of socially relevant topics. The strong PSB presence in the market, however, seems to be able to set a news standard which even the commercial channels in these markets have to adhere to. Thus, not only public channels in these countries but also their commercial competitors present highly diverse foreign news with a wide range of different countries covered. This is in contrast to almost all TV channels in Canada, Chile, Israel, Taiwan and the USA – countries in which market competition is also fierce but where there is no strong PSB presence.

In these five non-European countries, public service broadcasters play a weak role in the market, have small audience shares and often struggle with budget problems. These public service broadcasters can be grouped according to the extent they depend on advertising as a source of revenue. The public channels ISR_IBA, TPE_PTS and USA_PBS do not derive any

⁹⁰ In Belgium and Switzerland, TV channels do not only compete with other national broadcasters, but also with foreign TV channels from large neighbouring countries in which the same languages are spoken.

⁹¹ The two TV channels in Switzerland differ in this respect: SUI_SF rather resembles the German public channel ARD with very high proportions of speaking time assigned to actors from politics and economy whereas on SUI_TSR, representation of actor groups is more diverse.

⁹² Low coverage of socially relevant topics is highly correlated with high topic diversity (cf. Chapter 5.2.1). The Swiss channel TSR also differs from its German-language counterpart SF with regard to coverage of politics and economy with only 37% of its airtime devoted to these topics.

revenue from advertising; in some regards, they resemble European public channels that are also less dependent on advertising (BEL_VRT, GER_ARD, SUI_SF, SUI_TSR). Independence from advertising revenues means that these public broadcasters are not compelled to make TV news attractive to large audiences in order to satisfy advertisers' needs. TV news coverage on these seven channels is therefore characterized by high coverage of socially relevant topics,⁹³ little airtime for topics of low social relevance, and a low degree of sensationalist reporting. However, there are important differences between the European and non-European public broadcasters among these seven channels. Whereas the European public channels BEL_VRT, GER_ARD, SUI_SF and SUI_TSR retain a strong position and reach the highest ratings among news audience in their respective markets, the public channels in Israel, Taiwan and the USA occupy a niche position with rather small audiences.⁹⁴ These channels seem to pursue a strategy of specialized programming with focus on coverage of politics and economy – 45% to 72% of their airtime are devoted to these topics. Similar to their commercial competitors, they neglect foreign news coverage and dedicate the majority of their airtime (75% to 81%) to domestic news. The U.S. public channel PSB's newscast *The NewsHour with Jim Lehrer* provides a good illustration: being in a weak market position and unable to compete for network and cable news audiences, the *NewsHour* champions a strategy of forsaking high ratings and focusing on in-depth information for a small and interested audience. During the U.S. primaries in 2008, for example, the *NewsHour* regularly showed lengthy analyses of the primaries and discussions with political experts and analysts lasting up to twenty minutes. This kind of reporting might appeal to a distinct audience particularly interested in politics but is certainly not attractive to mass audiences.

Aside from strong market competition and weak PSB presence in the market, the television markets in Canada, Chile, Israel, Taiwan and the USA are also characterized by a strong dependency on advertising as a source of revenue for TV stations in general. This highly commercialized market environment seems to exert a great influence on some aspects of

⁹³ Exceptions are BEL_VRT and SUI_TSR with slightly below average coverage of politics and economy.

⁹⁴ In 2008, the Taiwanese public channel PTS reaches a person rating of only 0.1, the U.S. public channel PBS a person rating of 1.4, and the Israeli public channel IBA is more successful with a person rating of 7.3 (Israel Audience Research Board, 2009; Project for Excellence in Journalism, 2008; Public Television Service Foundation, 2008).

news performance. First, a pattern consistently found for the USA (Curran et al., 2009; Hoge, 1997; Iyengar et al., 2009; Norris, 1995; Schudson & Tifft, 2005) is confirmed in the other four countries, namely the low level of foreign news coverage. Both channels in Chile, Taiwan and the USA as well as the public Israeli channel IBA devote only up to 25% airtime to cover international news. Both Canadian channels and the Israeli commercial channel Arutz2 cover foreign countries more frequently, but resemble the other channels with respect to low diversity regarding the countries covered. All channels in these five countries present news from fewer countries than European channels in the sample and their foreign news is dominated by a few important countries, mostly the USA, their immediate neighbours or countries the country of broadcast is engaged in, e.g. Iraq for both U.S. channels.

Second, the respective commercial channel in Canada, Chile, Taiwan and the USA as well as the public channels in Canada and Chile (which depend on advertising revenues to a high degree) all attempt to attract news audience by employing a sensationalist style of reporting. Except for the U.S. channel NBC, these channels also devote comparatively large amounts of airtime to topics supposedly attractive to a mass audience but socially less relevant such as crime and violence, human interest, accidents and disasters. In a nutshell, highly commercialized television systems – i.e. systems with a strongly competitive market, lacking strong public service broadcasting and highly dependent on advertising revenues – indeed seem to affect news performance negatively. TV channels operating in this commercialized market environment pay less attention to international news and channels that have to compete heavily for audience in order to satisfy advertisers' needs – commercial channels and the public channels in Canada and Chile – also display more sensationalist news with respect to both content and style of reporting.

Regarding channel characteristics, ownership structure has proved to be quite influential in explaining news performance, particularly within European countries in the sample. European public service channels mostly display high news performance, as has been discussed above. European commercial channels differ from their public counterparts in two important aspects. All European commercial channels as well as those in Canada and Chile pay little attention to politics and economy – topics of high social relevance but supposedly not attractive to a mass audience. In Belgium, Italy, Poland, and Portugal – countries in which the television system greatly depends on advertising revenues – the commercial TV

channels (BEL_VTM, ITA_Canale5, POL_TVN, POR_TVI) all devote relatively little airtime to foreign news. These channels seem to cede this costly area of coverage that is supposedly not particularly attractive to a mass audience to their public competitors who both have a public mission to inform citizens about international affairs and, what is more important, invest more resources to cover international news. For example, the Polish public channel TVP1 has eleven foreign news correspondents whereas its commercial counterpart TVN employs only five foreign correspondents; the Portuguese public channel RTP also has eleven foreign correspondents as compared to only one for its commercial competitor TVI.⁹⁵ In Germany, the difference between the public service channel ARD and the commercial channel RTL is remarkable. Apart from a comparable level of foreign news coverage, both channels differ in all aspects of news performance: ARD focuses on socially highly relevant topics and neglects topics of low social relevance whereas RTL devotes rather little airtime to politics and economy while covering crime, violence, human interest, accidents and disasters extensively. As a consequence, RTL's newscast is more diverse than ARD's *Tagesschau* with regard to topic coverage and actor representation. Finally, RTL employs a highly sensationalist style of reporting whereas TV news on ARD is not at all sensational, neither with respect to topic coverage nor to tabloid packaging nor to vivid story telling.

In sum, commercial ownership exerts a negative influence on TV channels' news performance in some important respects. Commercial channels in European and non-European countries alike devote comparatively little airtime to cover politics and economy,⁹⁶ neglect international news coverage,⁹⁷ and tend to employ a sensationalist style of reporting in order to attract audience.⁹⁸ However, there are important deviances from this pattern. Although the commercial channels in Italy, Poland and Portugal also largely neglect socially relevant topics and foreign news, POL_TVN and POR_TVI do not pay a lot of attention to crime and violence, human interest, and accidents and disasters, either. Within the narrow space they devote to foreign news, ITA_Canale5 and POR_TVI still cover a wider range of

⁹⁵ Data are provided by members of the Foreign News on TV project.

⁹⁶ BEL_VTM, CDN_CTV, CHI_Mega, GER_RTL, ISR_Arutz2, ITA_Canale5, POL_TVN, POR_TVI

⁹⁷ BEL_VTM, CHI_Mega, ITA_Canale5, POL_TVN, POR_TVI, TPE_TVBS, USA_NBC

⁹⁸ BEL_VTM, CDN_CTV, CHI_Mega, GER_RTL, ISR_Arutz2, POL_TVN, TPE_TVBS, USA_NBC

countries in foreign news than other commercial channels and their degree of sensationalist reporting is rather low.

The last research question in this study (RQ4) asks whether channel characteristics or market environment are more influential in explaining news performance. The cross-national results just discussed indicate that there is no clear-cut answer to this question. Only the amount of foreign news coverage and country diversity within foreign news can be attributed to market environment. By and large, TV channels operating in commercialized television systems tend to pay less attention to international news and cover a narrower range of countries than TV channels in less commercialized systems. In contrast, differences in topic coverage and sensationalist reporting are always traced back to combinations of channel characteristics and market environment so that it is impossible to say which level has more explanatory power. This conclusion seems at first rather unsatisfying, but on the other hand, it certainly reflects the complex social reality as postulated in the multi-level model discussed in Chapter 2.4: it is the interplay between influences on the level of TV channels and influences from the market environment that affects the selection and presentation of news content.

Two qualifications are important to stress here. First, topic and actor diversity cannot well be explained in the present study. QCA results for high and low level of both aspects are mostly too heterogeneous to allow firm conclusions about potential effects of commercialization processes on news diversity (cf. Chapter 5.2.3). Second, it was not possible to investigate effects of market-orientation on news performance because except for the two Taiwanese channels, all other TV channels in the sample conduct market research on a regular basis. For this reason, I cannot rule out that the two QCA recipes identifying the two Taiwanese channels' low frequency of market research as causal condition for their high coverage of politics and economy and high actor diversity are mere artefacts.

6.2 Results for individual countries

As noted in Chapter 3.3, the countries in this study's sample serve primarily as the context within which potential consequences of economic influences on news performance are investigated and are not selected for their own sakes. In this type of "nation is context"-comparative research, there is always "a loss of the diverse cultural complexity and richness of detail that can be elaborated in single-country studies" (Blumler & Gurevitch, 1995, p. 81).

This study has so far also suffered from this loss as I have only identified cross-national patterns without detailed references to individual countries. Therefore, in the following, I will briefly discuss the television markets in the eleven countries in the sample, sum up the main results for the TV channels in each country and attempt to relate these results to the respective country's context. I will start with countries with less commercialized television systems: Germany, Switzerland and Belgium in Hallin and Mancini's Democratic Corporatist model, Portugal and Italy in the Polarized Pluralist model and also Poland whose media system has been compared to those in Mediterranean countries (Dobek-Ostrowska & Łódzki, 2008). I will conclude with countries in which the television system is more commercialized: Canada and USA in the Liberal model and the remaining countries Israel, Taiwan and Chile.

6.2.1 Germany

Germany has a classic dual broadcasting system consisting of still powerful public broadcasting organizations and numerous private programme providers. PSB programmes include two major full-service public channels, ARD and ZDF, and seven regional public TV channels. The channel analyzed in the present study, ARD/Das Erste, is not a programme of its own but carried by all German regional public service broadcasting corporations⁹⁹ which contribute to the programming according to their size (Kleinsteuber, 2004). Since the implementation of commercial broadcasting in 1984, German public service broadcasters have faced challenges common to their European counterparts: increasing competition both with commercial broadcasters and within the public broadcasting system (ARD vs. ZDF), a decline in audience share and the resulting need for justification of their service and the licence fee (Hoffmann-Riem, 1995). The public broadcasters have met these challenges fairly well by embarking on a dual strategy. On the one hand, they have been focusing on their traditional strength in informational programming and on the other hand, they have been

⁹⁹ ARD was founded as a "working group" by the regional public service broadcasting corporations in 1950. Although the official name for the channel is Das Erste (Channel One) as opposed to the second channel ZDF and the so-called Third Channels provided by regional public broadcasters, it is commonly referred to as ARD.

trying to compete with commercial channels in the areas of “entertainment journalism”¹⁰⁰ as well as fictional and non-fictional entertainment.

The public broadcasters’ efforts have so far paid off well. In 2008, the two full-service programmes ARD and ZDF have reached the highest market shares in Germany (13.4% and 13.1%) while the most successful commercial channel RTL had a slightly lower share of 11.7%. Together with the Third Channels and minor channels with focus on information and culture,¹⁰¹ all public service broadcasters attained 44.3% of the total market shares (Zubayr & Gerhard, 2009). ARD and ZDF have particularly succeeded in maintaining their “monopoly” in political information: among the top thirty information and public affairs programmes in 2008, twenty-six were aired by ARD or ZDF and despite some losses in the last years, TV news by public broadcasters reached a total market share of 75% as compared to 23% for all commercial channels together (Zubayr & Geese, 2009).

Tagesschau, the flag-ship news bulletin on ARD which is analyzed in the present study, traditionally enjoys an extremely high popularity and reputation. In 2008, the newscast reached an average market share of 32% (8.74 million viewers) as compared to 18% for the most successful commercial newscast *RTL Aktuell* which is also included in the sample. A longitudinal survey shows that from 1996 to 2008, ARD’s main newscast has been consistently rated by the respondents as the best news programme; the *Tagesschau* is considered as objective, reliable, and credible and its journalists are regarded as highly competent (Zubayr & Geese, 2009). The *Tagesschau*’s reputation for high quality news can be confirmed by the present study. It devotes substantial amounts of airtime to cover politics and economy (57%), hardly covers socially less relevant topics (3%), pays a lot of attention to international news and covers a wide range of countries in its foreign news, and does not display any trace of sensationalist reporting. The downside of the emphasis on politics and economy is a low level of diversity in topic coverage and actor representation which supposedly have led to a perception of ARD news as rather “stiff and dry” (p. 170).

¹⁰⁰ These are programmes originating from television journalism such as magazine and reports, documentaries, interview and discussion programmes but serve the purpose of entertainment through their topics and presentation (Maurer, Fretwurst, & Weiß, 2009).

¹⁰¹ These channels include KI.KA, 3sat, Arte and Phoenix.

The most successful commercial channel in Germany, RTL, originally started transmission from Luxembourg across the border¹⁰² and belongs to a group of TV programmes controlled by Bertelsmann (Dreier, 2009; Kleinsteuber, 2004). With respect to TV news, RTL clearly pursues a differentiation strategy and fosters a news profile diametrical to the newscast on ARD. The channel focuses on topics with mass appeal but socially less relevant at the expense of coverage politics and economy and displays a highly sensationalist style of reporting. The resulting high topic and actor diversity seems to be rewarded by the audience. In the same survey mentioned above, a clear majority of the respondents (69%) said that its newscast is “laid-back and fresh” (Zubayr & Geese, 2009). Only with regard to foreign news coverage is RTL on a similarly high level as ARD. Interestingly, the QCA results repeatedly point out RTL as a special case: operating in a less commercialized environment characterized by comparatively moderate competition and strong PSB presence, RTL attracts news audience by a remarkably market-oriented news profile. It seems that the channel’s ownership structure as part of a vast internationally operating conglomerate dominates its programme strategy considerably. In fact, RTL’s particular news profile has been noted in other studies, and according to Esser, the channel seems to have emerged as a “prototypical representative of a market-oriented news organization that champions the ideas of consumerism, infotainment, and game fixation” (2008, p. 422).

In sum, the results found for ARD and RTL corroborate existing knowledge about TV news in Germany. News by the public service channel focuses on politics and economy while the commercial channel pays more attention to sports, human interest and basic needs content than its public service competitor (Daschmann, 2009; Maurer, 2009). These different foci lead to higher topic and actor diversity in TV news on the commercial channel at the expense of coverage of socially most relevant topics.

6.2.2 Switzerland

The audio-visual media sector in Switzerland is dominated by SRG SSR idée Suisse (Bonfadelli, 2008), the Swiss public broadcasting organization which is also the largest media company in the country. Because of the small size of the media market which is further

¹⁰² Therefore, RTL stands for Radio Télévision Luxembourg.

fragmented by the three major language regions (German, French, and Italian), resulting in three even smaller submarkets, national commercial television channels could not be established in Switzerland, although there are a few commercial channels operating mainly on a regional basis. Only the SRG, founded in 1931 and modeled after the BBC, produces and broadcasts content in all four official languages.¹⁰³ There are in total eight TV channels broadcast by the SRG: three in the German-speaking part of Switzerland (SF1, SF2, SF Info), two for the French-language community (TSR1, TSR2), two for the Italian-language region (TSI LA1, TSI LA2), and one high definition channel (HD suisse). There are also regular contributions in Romansch within the overall programme of SF (W. A. Meier, 2009). The main evening news bulletins of SF and TSR were analyzed in the present study.¹⁰⁴

An important factor in the Swiss television market is the TV overspill from larger neighboring countries. The audience in the German-speaking part of Switzerland can easily tune in a wide variety of programmes from Germany and Austria, the French-speaking population can watch just as many programmes from France, and programmes from Italy are readily available to the population in Ticino. In fact, on the TV market, competition takes place primarily between SRG channels and foreign broadcasters (W. A. Meier, 2004). In the 1980s, the Swiss public broadcasters suffered losses in market shares to their foreign competitors but since the 1990s, they have been able to maintain a stable position. In 2008, the three German-language channels together have an audience share of 34% as compared to 51% for German and Austrian channels (Schweizer Fernsehen, 2009). The corresponding figure for the French-language channels is 31% while foreign TV channels, mostly from France, reached an audience share of 47%.¹⁰⁵ With regard to TV news, however, the two main evening newscasts of SF and TSR clearly dominate the market with audience shares of 55% and 58%, respectively.

¹⁰³ The fourth official language in Switzerland is Romansh which is spoken by a minority in a small area in the East.

¹⁰⁴ The German-language newscast *Tagesschau* is aired simultaneously on all three SF channels and the French-language newscast *Le Journal* is also aired simultaneously on TSR1 and TSR2.

¹⁰⁵ All audience data come from the TV panel of Mediapulse (www.publicadata.ch).

Thus, the high news performance by both Swiss public broadcasters seems to be rewarded by the audience. Especially *Tagesschau*, the newscast aired by SF, performs very well. It devotes large amounts of airtime to cover politics and economy (46%) and pays comparatively little attention to crime and violence, human interest, accidents and disasters (12%) but still manages to offer a topically diverse news programme by dividing the remaining airtime rather evenly between the remaining topic areas. SF assigns very great importance to foreign news coverage with 38% of its airtime devoted to purely foreign news, another 10% to foreign news with Swiss involvement and great diversity with regard to the countries covered. The level of sensationalist reporting is rather low, and the only area in which SF does not do well is actor diversity. In this regard, SF rather resembles its German counterpart ARD by granting actors in politics and economy many opportunities to speak for themselves at the expense of airtime for members of the public.

The French-language newscast, *Le Journal*, displays a news performance quite similar to *Tagesschau*, particularly with regard to coverage of socially less relevant topics, topic diversity, foreign news coverage, country diversity and low sensationalist reporting. It devotes less airtime to cover politics and economy, though, and also differs from SF by granting less speaking time to political and economic actors and more airtime to members of the public. These are, however, only minor differences and all things considered, TV news on SF and TSR are rather characterized by similarities than differences. This does not come as a surprise as both channels operate in very similar environments and are hosted by the same national public service broadcasting institution.

In sum, one could say that there is a positive interaction between the strong position the Swiss public broadcasters enjoy in the market and in society in general and their high news performance. In international comparison, the license fee for public broadcasting in Switzerland is with 462 Swiss francs per household and year¹⁰⁶ second highest in Europe (Künzler, 2008) and the public service broadcasting institution has been issued a 10-year license by the government in 2007 (W. A. Meier, 2009). Being in a secure legal, political, and financial position as well as being quasi-monopolist with regard to national news in their respective language region, the SRG channels can well afford to invest into TV news and thus

¹⁰⁶ for radio and television

optimize their news performance. This in turn enhances their audience's appreciation and reinforces the public broadcasters' position.

6.2.3 Belgium

Belgium is a small and multi-lingual country with three officially recognized languages – Dutch, French, and German. Due to this multi-lingualism and Belgium being the most densely cabled country in the world¹⁰⁷ (De Bens, 2004), the Belgian public has for many years had access to a large and varied supply of TV channels, both national and foreign. Since 1998, television has been receiving 43% of advertising income, more than printed and other media. Both facts contribute to a rather strong competition between TV channels for audience and advertising revenues. In general, the Belgian broadcasting system has always been shaped by cultural and political differences between Flemings and Walloons. Since 1960, there have been two different broadcasting corporations and regulatory frameworks in Flanders and Wallonia.¹⁰⁸ The present study, however, is only concerned with television in the Dutch-speaking community.

As elsewhere in Western Europe, the Flemish public channel VRT has been confronted with huge problems at the introduction of commercial broadcasting. In 1989, the newly launched private channel VTM became an instant success with a peak audience share of 44% in 1995 while the public television broadcaster's share dropped to 29%. VRT responded by adopting an imitation strategy, i.e. by offering more popular entertainment during prime time, and thus caused controversial discussions about its increasingly less public service profile (De Bens, 2004). After a reorganization in 1997 with its profile changed and budget augmented, the public broadcaster has regained a strong position. The first programme (VRT Eén) is now a general-interest channel addressing a broad audience and is oriented toward commercial competitors' profile while the second programme (VRT Canvas) provides more cultural programming for a distinct audience. This new framework has proved successful and VRT today has even a larger share of Flemish viewers than VTM (31.2% for VRT Eén vs. 23.1% for

¹⁰⁷ 98% of all television households have access to cable (De Bens, 2004).

¹⁰⁸ In 1997, a third public broadcasting corporation was created for the German-speaking population.

VTM). Criticism about the public broadcaster's tabloidization has nevertheless continued (De Bens & Ros, 2009).

According to a previous study comparing the newscasts of the public channel VRT and its main commercial competitor VTM (De Bens & Paulussen, 2005, cited in De Bens & Ros, 2009), there are only few differences between the two channels; the public channel VRT dedicates relatively much airtime to human interest and sensational topics and has reduced its foreign coverage and attention to cultural issues. These findings can be only partly replicated in the present study. There are indeed some similarities between the two channels regarding the low level of coverage of politics and economy, high news diversity with respect to topic coverage, actor representation and countries in foreign news. However, I also found substantial differences between VRT and VTM: the commercial channel spends much more airtime covering socially less relevant topics (10% vs. 21%), pays considerably less attention to international news than VRT (27% vs. 42%), and displays a sensationalist style of reporting which is not at all the case for VRT.

The similarities between both channels might be traced to back to a difficult balance the public broadcaster VRT has to maintain. Not only is the market environment for Belgian TV channels per se rather competitive as described above. In addition, according to its agreement with the Flemish government, VRT is required to reach at least a daily audience of 1.5 million viewers with its newscast – an extremely high number for the rather small television market in Flanders (De Bens & Ros, 2009). This requirement puts VRT in a difficult position. On the one hand, it has to fight with commercial competitors for news audience but on the other hand still has to retain its public service profile. This fierce competition for news audience might explain why both channels provide diverse and thus more interesting news programmes at the expense of coverage of politics and economy. However, VRT seems not to engage in a “race to the bottom” – it still commits to a high level of foreign news coverage and refrains from sensationalist reporting and thus displays a generally high news performance. The reason why VRT partly succeeds in resisting competitive pressures might be that its position and funding is guaranteed by the Flemish government. In 2002, the authorities abolished the radio and television license fee; VRT is now funded by public means and the amount of funding for the public broadcaster are fixed in five-year agreements between the government and VRT which is not allowed to carry advertising. By

maintaining that the funding of a public broadcasting corporation is part of a public service, the Flemish government might have given VRT the necessary backing to maintain its public service profile, at least with regard to TV news.

6.2.4 Portugal

Portugal's communication policy in the 1980s and 1990s has been referred to as one of "savage deregulation" (Traquina, 1995, as cited in Hallin & Mancini, 2004), a phenomenon common to many Mediterranean countries with a rapid and uncontrolled transition from state- controlled to commercial broadcasting. In the Portuguese context, this term refers to the uncontrolled introduction of commercial broadcasting without any impositions of public service obligations on commercial broadcasters and to the fact that regulatory authorities are in many cases unsuccessful in enforcing broadcast regulation. In 2006, the Portuguese regulatory body ERC¹⁰⁹ renewed the license for the two full-service private programmes SIC and TVI despite the statement that both channels do not sufficiently offer public affairs, children, culture, and education programming (Sousa & Santos, 2009).

From 1993 onwards, there have been four national channels on the Portuguese television market: two channels offered by the public service broadcaster (RTP1 and RTP2) and the aforementioned channels SIC and TVI (Pinto & Sousa, 2004). In 2008, TVI was market leader with an audience share of 29.4%, followed by SIC with 26.3%. The main public channel RTP1 has constantly reached a share of around 24% for the last ten years and the second channel RTP2 is watched by 5% of the audience (Cardoso & Mendonça, 2006; Sousa & Santos, 2009). Television is the most important medium in Portugal; 99% of the population watches TV every day and the average daily TV use is with 212 minutes comparatively high. Because of its importance, the television system as a whole attracts 70% of all advertising expenditures in 2007 and consequently, competition among TV channels for audience and advertising revenue is fierce (Sousa & Santos, 2009).

According to the QCA results, the strong competition and the high degree to which the whole television market depends on advertising revenues offer sufficient causal explanation for the high diversity regarding topic coverage and actor representation in the newscasts by

¹⁰⁹ Entidade Reguladora para a Comunicação Social

RTP and TVI. This high diversity, however, is achieved at the expense of coverage of socially most relevant topics such as politics and economy (POR_RTP: 37% and TVI: 33%). On the other hand, both channels do not pay a lot of attention to crime and violence, human interest, accidents and disasters, either (8% and 10%). It appears that both channels do not make use of topics with mass appeal but of low social relevance to attract audience and do not make frequent use of a sensationalist reporting, either. The level of sensationalism on the analyzed Portuguese channels is not as low as on the best performing European public channels such as GER_ARD or SUI_SF, but still relatively low when compared to Canadian or Chilean TV channels.

That the news performance by the Portuguese public channel RTP1 is somewhat lower than that displayed by its counterpart in Democratic Corporatist countries might be explained by RTP's financially insecure position. When the Portuguese government abolished the license fee in 1992 and introduced commercial broadcasting, the public broadcaster entered an acute crisis with the loss of its monopoly, audience leadership and the license fee as its main source of income (Pinto & Sousa, 2004). RTP is reported to have chronic operating problems and acquired a substantial amount of debt (Cardoso & Ramos, 2006). Today, the main income for the public broadcaster comes from state subsidies while advertising revenues still constitute an important source of income.¹¹⁰ Despite these difficulties, RTP's news performance is higher than TVI in some regards: the public channel devotes slightly more airtime to cover politics and economy and pays more attention to foreign news than its commercial competitor (30% vs. 22%). The higher level of foreign news coverage and also the higher diversity of countries covered in foreign news can be traced back to RTP's higher financial commitment to international news: the public broadcaster employs eleven foreign correspondents while TVI has only one correspondent based in Brussels.

6.2.5 Italy

Italy illustrates a classic case of "savage deregulation" in the broadcasting sector (Hallin & Mancini, 2004). From the time the Italian Constitutional Court allowed private companies to enter into the formerly monopolized broadcasting market in 1976 until 1990, Italy had no

¹¹⁰ This information is provided by the Portuguese team within the Foreign News on TV project.

laws regulating commercial broadcasting. It is in this period characterized by an almost total lack of legislation that Silvio Berlusconi managed to enter broadcasting and set up a network of three TV channels which are today still at the centre of his communication empire (Mazzoleni, 2004, 2008). When the *Mammì* law (called after the Minister of Communications at the time) was passed in 1990, it was heavily criticized for legitimizing the status quo of the duopoly of the public broadcasting company RAI and Berlusconi's Fininvest (now Mediaset) (Mazzoleni, 2004, 2008; Splendore, 2009). Today, the Italian (free) television market is still dominated by RAI and Mediaset; in 2007, the six main channels of the two groups reached a combined audience share of over 80% (RAI1, RAI2 and RAI3 with 41.8%, and Canale5, Italia1 and Rete4 with 40.6%).¹¹¹ Rai1 and Canale5, the two channels included in this study's sample, are the main channels of their respective group and offer a wide programme range of information, entertainment and fiction.

RAI1's news performance is similar to that of other European public service channels in several respects. It devotes a substantial portion of its news hole to cover politics and economy, pays comparatively little attention to socially less relevant topics, and does not make frequent use of a sensationalist reporting style. The rather low level of foreign news coverage on RAI1 as well as on Canale5 (21% and 16%) can certainly be explained by political developments in Italy at the time the content analysis was carried out. In January 2008, the government of Prime Minister Romano Prodi was forced to resign and a snap general election was held on April 13th and 14th. The cabinet crisis and subsequent elections certainly occupied the major part of TV news coverage during this time period and drove out international news that otherwise might have been covered.

Except for its topic coverage, which is slightly below average regarding politics and economy (37%) and somewhat above average with regard to socially less relevant topics (17%), Canale5's news performance is quite comparable to its public counterpart. Interestingly, Canale5 was identified in only two QCA solutions, namely for its low coverage of politics and economy and its low level of foreign news coverage. The latter might well be traced back to another explanation than the channel's commercial ownership. It appears that economic

¹¹¹ Data are provided by the MAVISE database. If the audience share of News Corporation's satellite service Sky Italia is taken into consideration, then RAI's share is about 34% and Mediaset's share is about 30% (Splendore, 2009).

influences do not offer sufficient causal explanation for the Italian commercial channel's news performance.

6.2.6 Poland

Poland is regarded as one of the most successful transition countries of the former communist Eastern bloc. Its democracy is consolidated, economic reform has led to the development of a functioning market economy and in 2004, Poland became a member of the European Union (Hadamik, 2008; Jakubowicz, 2004). A dual broadcasting system was introduced in 1993 when the former state-run broadcasters were broken down into eighteen separate stock corporations of public service radio and television and the first licenses for private broadcasters were issued. According to Dobek-Ostrowska and Łódzki (2008), the Polish media system has many features of the Polarized Pluralist model presented by Hallin and Mancini (2004) such as late democratization, insufficient economic development, weak rational-legal authority combined with a dirigist state, low degree of modernization of media systems, instrumentalization of media by the political system and low professionalism of journalists (Jakubowicz, 2008).

Average daily TV use in Poland is in comparison with other European countries very high (232 minutes per day in 2008; Filas & Planeta, 2009). The Polish television market is dominated by the "Big Four": the two channels offered by the public broadcaster TVP1 and TVP2 and the two commercial channels Polsat and TVN. Despite losses in audience popularity in recent years, the public channels are still market leaders with audience shares of 22.6% (TVP1) and 16.8% (TVP2); including all specialized channels, the public broadcasting company TVP reached a market share of 43.9%. Among the commercial broadcasters, TVN is more successful than Polsat (16.4% vs. 15.7%) due to more innovative programming; its evening news programme *Fakty* has an audience share even higher than that of the main public channel TVP1 *Wiadomości* (32.2% vs. 30.6%).

Despite its strong dependency on advertising revenues (66% of all income in 2008),¹¹² TVP1's news performance is comparable to that of other European public channels, at least with regard to the aspects measured in this study. The channel devotes half of its news hole to

¹¹² This information is provided by the Polish team in the Foreign News on TV project.

cover politics and economy, only 7% to crime and violence, human interest, and accidents and disasters and the level of sensationalist reporting is low. Foreign news takes up a third of its airtime and the country diversity within foreign news is also relatively high, although TVP1 does not reach the standard of the public channels in Belgium, Germany or Switzerland in this regard. This news performance could be a consequence of the organizational restructuring and personnel changes in 2006 introduced by the new director Bronislaw Wildstein whose aim was to strengthen TVP's public service profile and reduce commercial influences in the public broadcaster's programming (Filas & Planeta, 2009).

TVN's news performance is more difficult to interpret. Its topic coverage, both with regard to politics and economy and socially less relevant topics, and foreign news coverage are on or slightly below average and thus indicate a news performance comparable to or even slightly higher than other commercial channels. On the other hand, TVN's newscast displays rather low country diversity in foreign news and a comparatively high level of sensationalist reporting. Accordingly, the conducted QCAs are not able to clearly identify causal conditions explaining TVN's news performance and the channel is contained in only two causal recipes. Similar to the Italian commercial channel Canale5, economic influences on TVN are not reflected in the channel's TV news.

6.2.7 Canada

Canada's media system is strongly influenced by the country's bilingualism and its close and ambivalent relationship with the USA. French-language media are hardly consumed outside of Québec, leading to concerns about linguistic divisions among Canadians. In the English-speaking part of the country, American programmes are widely available and the most popular programmes in English Canada mirror the most popular programmes in the United States (Beaty, 2008). Preserving Canada's cultural identity and sovereignty has therefore long been a major concern in Canadian media policy, and TV channels are required to air at least 60% Canadian content in their programme (Raboy & Skinner, 2009). The Broadcasting Act of 1991 maintains that the Canadian broadcasting system is a public service essential to this goal.

The Canadian public broadcasting network operates both in English (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation) and French (Société Radio-Canada). As only English-language newscasts were

analyzed in this study, I will discuss in the following only the television market in the English-speaking part of the country. Television service was introduced in Canada in 1952. Already in 1961, the first private network CTV opened and in 1974, the Global network was launched. In the 1990s, the public broadcaster CBC suffered from a series of funding cuts. By 2005/2006, the amount of government subsidies allotted to CBC has been reduced to 946 million Canadian dollars, far below the 1990 budget of \$1.2 billion (Beaty, 2008; Raboy & Skinner, 2009). These funding cuts have led to CBC's increased dependence on advertising as a source of revenue. On the audience market, the public broadcaster has a very weak position: in 2008, the main channel reached a market share of only 5.4% (CRTC, 2009). With regard to TV news, its main evening newscast, *The National*, lags far behind Canada's most watched national newscast *CTV National News* and also behind the Global network's newscast *Global National* (Gidengil, 2008).

Apparently, the market environment CBC operates in and its financial situation exert a great influence on the public channel's strategy regarding TV news. Unlike its American competitor PBS's newscast which addresses a niche audience, CBC seems to compete with CTV and Global with a news programme fairly similar to the one aired by CTV, the market-leader. The channel devotes slightly more airtime to cover politics and economy than CTV (43% vs. 39%), but the proportions of airtime both channels allot to all remaining topics including those of rather low social relevance are quite comparable. CTV even grants actors in politics and economy more speaking opportunities and pays relatively more attention to foreign news than the public channel (43% vs. 34%). Both channels also employ a sensationalist style of reporting as a means of attracting audience. The only area in which CBC displays a slightly higher news performance than CTV is country diversity. Although this measure is quite low for both channels, CBC still covers more countries in its foreign news and its concentration on powerful countries is not as pronounced as on CTV. This difference might be explained by CBC's higher amount of resources invested in foreign news; the public channel employs fourteen foreign correspondents as compared to CTV's six foreign correspondents (Godó & Goodrum, 2009).

All things considered, one could say that the Canadian television market has a great explanatory power concerning news performance of the two TV channels in the sample. Despite the public service remit as defined in the Broadcasting Act of 1991, the television

system resembles more the Chilean television market with regard to its degree of commercialization. Accordingly, the news performance of CBC and CTV is more similar to that displayed by the Chilean TV channels in the sample than channels in countries with a strong tradition of public service broadcasting, e.g. Germany or Belgium.

6.2.8 USA

The USA represents the prototype of the market-based model of broadcasting in which broadcast media are almost entirely privately owned and financed by advertising, and where regulation is relatively weak (Hallin & Mancini, 2004; Iyengar & McGrady, 2007). The Federal Communications Commission, the regulatory body in charge of broadcasting regulation, has under the Reagan administration replaced its former trustee approach with a marketplace approach which holds that the mere existence of market competition between news outlets is sufficient to serve the public interest (Horwitz, 2005; Napoli, 2006). As a consequence, formerly strict public interest standards were loosened or completely abolished, e.g. the Fairness Doctrine, and ownership restrictions relaxed.

Public service broadcasting exists in the USA since 1967 with the establishment of the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) by Congress. In contrast to European public service broadcasting, however, PBS has always had a weak position, both financially and with regard to popularity with the audience. Most PBS funding comes from private corporations and individual donors while less than 50% of its funding come from government sources (Hallin & Mancini, 2004); in 2007, this amount was 120 million U.S. dollars (Kleinstauber, 2009). What is more, even this subsidy is frequently under threat due to allegations of PBS' liberal bias from Republicans in Congress. On the audience market, PBS reaches only 2% of the American television audience (Iyengar & McGrady, 2007). Its news programme, the *NewsHour with Jim Lehrer* – draws on average about one-fifth the ratings of the average commercial network news programme, about 1.1 million viewers per night. Compared with viewers of network news and cable news, the *NewsHour's* audience tends to be more educated and have higher incomes (Project for Excellence in Journalism, 2009). This fact corroborates the conclusion drawn in Chapter 6.1, namely that the PBS news programme seems to pursue a niche strategy by providing in-depth information to a distinct interested audience.

The U.S. television market was dominated by the three major networks ABC, CBS and NBC until the 1970s when cable television was introduced. In the subsequent decades, the networks have suffered heavy losses to their competitors in cable and satellite television and to the fourth network Fox Television. Today, the Big Three still play an important role in the market but their position is rather insecure. Particularly in the area of evening news, the development on the audience market has been devastating for the networks. Over the past three decades, the audience size has fallen about one million per year from 52 million viewers in 1980 to 23 million viewers in 2008 and market shares have fallen to 28% in 2008 from 75% in 1980 (Project for Excellence in Journalism, 2009). In fact, economic woes are at present the most important concerns for the network news divisions, as advertising revenues have been stagnated for years; in 2008, only NBS' news divisions supposedly gained profit and CBS's news division may have just broken even (ibid.). NBC's evening news programme *Nightly News* – which was analyzed in the present study – is also the market leader in 2008 with 8.6 million viewers a night and a market share of 11% on average.

According to Iyengar and McGrady (2007), the advertising-based system and the relatively weak regulatory framework are the main reasons why (privately owned) American news media tend to “fall short of expectations” and “deliver programming that is more entertaining than informative” (pp. 43-44). However, this postulated negative influence of the market and regulatory environment on news performance cannot be fully confirmed by the present study. One reason is the time period in which the content analysis was carried out: NBC's topic coverage in TV news – and likewise PBS's *NewsHour* – was dominated by the U.S. primaries, particularly the contest between the Democratic candidates Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama. The rather high proportion of both channel's news holes dedicated to politics coverage (45% for PBS and 46% for NBC) can certainly be traced back to these elections. The only differences between NBC and PBS regarding topic coverage are the much greater attention PBS pays to economic themes (27% vs. 13%) and the slightly higher – but comparatively still rather low – amount of airtime NBC devotes to human interest topics (6% vs. 1%). These differences along with the high level of sensationalist reporting on NBC might be an indication for the network news division's yielding to market pressures.

The area of foreign news coverage might provide the best illustration of how economic influences affect news in the U.S. context. In its 2008 report, the Project for Excellence in

Journalism (PEJ) compared the level of interest news consumers express in stories identified as top stories in the media and found that the already low level of international news on American media is still perceived by news consumers as too high. The PEJ concluded that there might be a “chicken-and-egg effect” in that “if Americans really aren’t interested in global conflicts, the press has even less incentive to spend time and money on those stories”. This might be true not only for the commercial network NBC, but also for the public channel PBS. Both channels spend around four fifths of their airtime covering domestic stories (79% and 82%); and the proportion of the news hole that goes to purely foreign news, i.e. news events in which the USA are not involved, is the lowest in the whole sample of this study (6% and 7%). One could rightly argue that because PBS’s *NewsHour* is with 49 minutes much longer than NBC’s *Nightly News* with twenty minutes, the absolute amount of international news on PBS is higher. On the other hand, however, the scope of international news on PBS is as narrow as on NBC, with only around thirty different countries covered and these are mostly countries in which the USA have ongoing engagements, most prominently Iraq, Israel, and Palestine.

Overall, this study finds only small indications for economic influences on news performance for the U.S. channels NBC and PBS. One reason for this result – the dominance of the U.S. primaries on TV news – has been noted above. Another reason might be that in recent years, pressures on the news divisions to be profit centres have lessened somewhat (Project for Excellence in Journalism, 2009). The network evening news have traditionally enjoyed a high reputation and today play an important role in building brand as their main news bulletins are of higher quality in comparison to cable and local news.¹¹³ All that said, economic concerns will still dominate the news operations of both networks and PBS. For the commercial networks, advertising revenues are expected to be scant as a consequence of the financial and economic crisis. For PBS, compensating funding cuts from corporations and foundations in 2008 will be the major challenge for the near future.

¹¹³ A content analysis by the PEJ (2009) found that network evening news are broader in subject matter than cable news shows and more likely to contain reported, taped story packages that are more able to explain complex news stories.

6.2.9 Israel

Television was introduced to Israel only in 1968 after the Six Day War (Caspi & Limor, 1999; Schejter, 2009). For twenty-five years, there was only one TV channel operated by the Israel Broadcasting Authority; therefore, Channel1 is referred to as IBA. The public television channel is financed by a license fee, directed by a board of governors and officially independent of government. Advertising is prohibited on public television, but public service announcements and sponsorships are allowed. In its best days, public television was a major force contributing to a feeling of collectivism and “togetherness” in the Israel public sphere (Katz, Haas, & Gurevitch, 1997). 70% of Israelis regularly tuned in the IBA evening newscast which provided a shared agenda for discussions on the next day (Liebes, 2000). Commercial television was introduced also rather late; the first private programme, Channel2 (Arutz2), was not launched until 1993. This channel is completely advertising-based and overseen by the Second Authority for Television and Radio, a public board separate from the IBA (Schejter, 2009).

Arutz2 has quickly become successful and is now the most popular channel in Israel while the former monopolist IBA has lost remarkable shares; in 2008, Channel1 achieved only an audience share of 4.9%.¹¹⁴ The same development can be found for its evening news programme. From 70% on its peak, the 9pm newscast now reaches an audience share of only 6.5% whereas *Hadashot2*, the newscast on Arutz2 are watched by 19% of all television households. The newscast on Channel10, a new commercial channel launched in 2002, even surpasses IBA with a share of 9.5% (Schejter, 2009). Interestingly, the introduction of additional newscasts has cut the total number of news viewers in half – as if the new choices abolished the norm of the “civic ritual” of watching TV news (Katz et al., 1997).

In some respects, IBA’s news performance resembles that of other PSB channels that do not derive any or only a small proportion of revenues from advertising (GER_ARD, SUI_SF, SUI_TSR, TPE_PTS, USA_PBS). IBA devotes a large amount of airtime to cover politics and economy, hardly covers news about crime and violence, human interest themes, or accidents and disasters, and does not display any trace of sensationalist reporting. In contrast to the German and Swiss public channels, however, IBA shows a rather low level of

¹¹⁴ Data are provided by the Israel Audience Research Board (www.midrug-tv.org.il).

foreign news coverage (25%) with a narrow range of countries covered, similar to TPE_PTS and USA_PBS. The comparatively low level of foreign news coverage and country diversity in foreign news on IBA can be traced back to the quite small amount of resources the channel allots to this area; IBA has only one permanent foreign correspondent based in Washington and some freelancers in the UK, France and Italy.¹¹⁵ In general, IBA has suffered from a crisis regarding its role and financial basis for quite some time; an extensive reform and restructuring seems inevitable and is currently under discussion (Schejter, 2009).

Arutz2 performs slightly worse than IBA with regard to topic coverage – the differences between the two channels concerning coverage of politics and economy as well as of socially less relevant topics are rather small (6% and 4%, respectively) – but better than the public channel regarding the amount of airtime dedicated to foreign news (31% vs. 25%). Its country diversity in foreign news is like IBA rather low and can also be explained by its small number of foreign correspondents. Apart from a few freelancers, there are only two permanent correspondents, one also placed in Washington and the other covers all of Europe. Only with respect to sensationalism does the commercial channel differ notably from its public counterpart as it devotes more airtime to cover issues considered as sensational and makes more frequent use of sensational formal elements in TV news. Its particular ownership structure – four members of the channel's board of directors are representatives of the publicly regulated Second Authority for Television and Radio and four represent the two franchises (two per franchise) that run the programmes¹¹⁶ – might explain why Arutz2 does not display a more market-oriented news profile as might have been expected of commercial channels.

6.2.10 Taiwan

Over the past 20 years, Taiwan has experienced massive political changes, namely a transformation from a one-party state under the rule of the Kuomintang¹¹⁷ to a democratic

¹¹⁵ The information on the number of foreign correspondents IBA and Arutz2 employ is provided by the Israeli team in the Foreign News on TV project.

¹¹⁶ One franchise broadcasts three days per week and the other broadcasts four days per week (Schejter, 2009).

¹¹⁷ Chinese Nationalist Party

country. Accordingly, the Taiwanese media landscape has undergone a tremendous development. Prior to the emergence of cable television, there were only three state-owned broadcast television stations. In the 1980s, unlicensed cable operations were launched by entrepreneurs and subsequently cable television expanded rapidly despite government efforts to stamp out illegal cable operators (Wang & Lo, 2000). Eventually, the Cable Television Law legalizing the booming cable industry was passed in 1993 and by 1998, 80% of all Taiwanese TV households were subscribing to cable TV services. Today, the competition on the Taiwanese television market is probably one of the fiercest in the world. The population of only 23 million inhabitants is served by five terrestrial television stations and more than 150 cable and satellite television channels including about ten 24-hour news channels (Huang, 2009; Taiwanese Government Information Office, 2009). As a consequence of competition for audience, political reporting displays a high level of sensationalism and the current Taiwanese television market has been compared to the situation in the USA in the late nineteenth century, the era of “yellow journalism” when Hearst and Pulitzer engaged in a bitter struggle for newspaper readers (Huang, 2009).

Public television in Taiwan is offered by the Taiwan Broadcasting System which comprises the channel PTS (Public Television Service), the previously government-owned channel CTS (Chinese Television System) and three other specialized TV channels which also were state-run (Taiwanese Government Information Office, 2009). PTS was introduced in 1998 as a non-profit station with public interest obligations and a mission to cater to “audiences often overlooked by commercial television, including children, senior citizens, minority groups, and the hearing-impaired” (ibid.). Until today, the channel has played a marginal role with very limited scale and impact; in 2008, PTS had a market share of below 1% (Public Television Service Foundation, 2008).

PTS’ news coverage mirrors that by the U.S. public channel PBS. Being a public channel deriving no advertising revenues at all, its coverage is dominated by politics¹¹⁸ and economy with very little airtime devoted to socially less relevant topics and a complete lack of sensationalist reporting. On the downside, its international news coverage is very limited

¹¹⁸ The high proportions of airtime devoted to politics coverage on PTS and also on TVBS, the commercial channel, can certainly be traced back to the Taiwanese presidential elections taking place in March 2008.

and the range of foreign countries covered is narrow – a finding mirrored in other countries with highly commercialized television systems.

The commercial TV channel in the sample, TVBS, is the most successful cable channel and a joint venture between Hong Kong's Television Broadcast Ltd. and Taiwan's largest film distributor, ERA Communications (Lo, Neilan, & King, 1998). TVBS' news performance is strongly influenced by the highly commercialized market environment it operates in: the channel dedicates a comparatively large proportion of its news hole to topics that are supposedly attractive to a mass audience but of low social relevance (22%), particularly human interest themes (14%), and displays a highly sensationalist style of reporting. With only 8% of its news hole devoted to foreign news coverage, TVBS virtually ignores international news and accordingly, the degree of country diversity is very low with a total of only eighteen countries mentioned. Thus, TVBS confirms the above-mentioned postulated negative consequences of the strongly competitive Taiwanese television market on news reporting.

6.2.11 Chile

Chile provides a very illustrative example of how economic conditions influence news performance. The Chilean broadcasting system is significantly privatized and entirely commercial in the sense that all broadcasters are advertising-based, including university channels and the state-owned channel TVN (Sinclair, 2008). The establishment of a commercial communications system based on TV, in private hands, self-financed, and oriented toward entertainment or news has already been started under the Pinochet dictatorship (Tironi & Sunkel, 2000). After the end of the dictatorship, the Concertación government continued the privatization of the media system. As the principal objective of the new government is to establish pluralism, a continued existence of state media would interfere with this goal. Thus, the state-owned channel TVN was converted into an autonomous public entity with public service orientation; privileges previously enjoyed such as subsidies and special grants were eliminated and self-financing via advertising was opted for (Porath & Mujica, 2009; Tironi & Sunkel, 2000). After 1990, the commercialization of the media system was intensified by the Concertación government which permitted two private channels, Megavisión and La Red, to open up and also allowed cross-media and foreign

ownership. Megavisión, the channel included in the present study's sample, is the most successful private broadcasters and belongs to an economic group with interests in various sectors such as shipping, industry and agriculture (Tironi & Sunkel, 2000).

Television is the most important source of information in Chile, as almost nine out of ten Chileans turn to television to get general information (Carvajal Rivera, 2009) and three out of four Chileans use television for political information (Tironi & Sunkel, 2000). The importance of television is reflected by the relevance advertisers accord to the medium: almost 50% of all advertising expenditures go to television. As all TV channels – private, commercial channels, university channels and the state-owned channel alike – are advertising-based, competition for audience and, in consequence, for advertising revenues on the Chilean television market is fierce.

The high degree of commercialization on the Chilean television market – strong competition, strong reliance on advertising and a comparatively weak position of public service broadcasting¹¹⁹ – seem to exert a powerful negative influence on Chilean TV channels' news performance. Both channels in the sample – TVN and Mega – display a similarly low news performance, in fact the lowest performance among all TV channels analyzed.¹²⁰ Topic coverage in TV news by both channels reflects Chileans' general disinterest in politics (Tironi & Sunkel, 2000): only 20% of both channels' airtime is devoted to coverage of politics and economy, less than the airtime reserved for sports coverage (27% on TVN and 23% on Mega). The amount of airtime devoted to other socially less relevant topics with mass appeal (crime and violence, human interest, accidents and disasters) is also comparatively high (16% on TVN and 19% on Mega), resulting in high topic diversity on both channels.

The distribution of topic coverage affects actor representation considerably. Actors from politics and economy are granted fewer opportunities to speak for themselves on Chilean TV than in other countries. Conversely, in no other country are actors from the areas sports and

¹¹⁹ The state-owned channel TVN is with 19% market share not as weak as the public channels in Israel, Canada or the USA, but plays a much less significant role than public service channels in European countries such as Germany or Switzerland.

¹²⁰ Apart from topic and actor diversity, TVN and Mega consistently fare below average with regard to the remaining aspects of news performance.

human interest granted so much speaking time as on TVN and Mega. The resulting high actor diversity might be a consequence of the channels' response to survey results published by the Chilean national television council in 2005 (Carvajal Rivera, 2009). This survey found that news viewers criticized the large amount of airtime granted to actors in politics and economy at the expense of representation of members of the public.¹²¹

The potentially negative influence of a highly commercialized market environment on news performance can be fully confirmed for foreign news coverage and sensationalist reporting on both channels. Only one fourth of their airtime is devoted to international news (23% and 24%). With respect to sensationalism, both TVN and Mega stand out with a remarkably high usage of formal elements contributing to tabloid packaging (46% and 40%, average: 16%) and above average coverage of basic needs content and insertion of interviews with laypersons. The public service channel TVN displays a somewhat less sensationalist style of reporting than Mega and also fares slightly better regarding country diversity in foreign news but all in all, the differences between both channels are marginal. TVN's news performance reflects the channel's programming strategy. Financed completely by advertising, the public service channel opts for a popular news programming that is oriented toward its commercial competitors in order to reach news audience. This strategy has so far proved successful: TVN's newscast *24 Horas* has the highest average ratings of all evening newscasts in Chile (Porath & Mujica, 2009).

¹²¹ This explanation is however only speculative because there is no empirical evidence about actor representation on Chilean TV news in 2005.

7 Conclusion

The main aim of this study is to investigate potential consequences of commercialization processes on media organizations' news performance. The study focuses on television and asks whether economic influences coming from the market environment and characteristics of TV channels affect their news performance with respect to topic coverage, news diversity and sensationalism. The present study is based on a data basis that is rather broad for comparative media research: it investigates television markets in eleven countries and channel characteristics as well as news content of twenty-two TV channels. Data on news content are provided by the Foreign News on TV project in which four non-consecutive natural weeks of TV news in all participating countries were coded by means of a comprehensive codebook; thus, the resulting dataset is more extensive than in most previously conducted cross-national analyses of news content (Wilke, 2008).

7.1 Methodological features

The country sample combines a most similar with a most different systems design. The seven countries in Western Europe and North America representing most similar systems are evenly divided between all three systems in Hallin and Mancini's typology (2004). Customarily, comparative studies focus on comparisons between countries in the Liberal model, particularly the USA and the UK, and Democratic Corporatist countries. Therefore, care has been taken to include countries from the Polarized Pluralist model (Portugal and Italy) as countries in this model have rarely been investigated in comparative media and communication research.¹²² The remaining four countries in the sample are from Latin America, Eastern Europe, Middle East, and Asia and provide a different system context. The case of Chile for example clearly shows that the assumed relationship between economic influences and news performance can also be found in a non-Western country with a highly commercialized television system.

Comparative research should not only describe and categorize similarities and differences in news content between different countries, but also provide causal explanations for these

¹²² Exceptions are e.g. the studies by Esser et al. (2009) and Plasser et al. (2009).

similarities and differences (Esser, 2003). A number of studies have linked cross-national differences in news content to characteristics of the respective political and media system, particularly in the context of election coverage (e.g. Esser, 2008; Esser et al., 2009; Semetko, 1991; Swanson & Mancini, 1996). Recently, a few studies have traced cross-national differences in news and current affairs contents on TV to the degree of commercialization of different television systems (Aalberg et al., forthcoming; Curran et al., 2009). These studies, however, have not actually determined the degree of commercialization by empirical measures but only deduced this from theoretical knowledge about the regime of media regulation and public service broadcasting in the respective countries. In the present study, the degree of commercialization of television systems and economic pressures exerted by channel characteristics are actually measured by external data. Using quantitative indicators such as the number of competing newscasts or the proportions of adspend for television in general provides a more precise and objective evaluation of the degree of commercialization in the respective television system. For example, the relative strength of public service broadcasting is measured by market shares of public TV channels in the respective market and economic pressure on public TV channels by the extent to which they derive revenues from advertising and not (solely) derived from theoretical knowledge on the respective country's media regulatory regime concerning public service broadcasting.

This study is further characterized by two important methodological features. The first refers to the multi-dimensional operationalization of news performance which enables a more differentiated analysis of economic influences on different aspects of news performance – topic coverage, news diversity, sensationalist reporting. The results show that topic and actor diversity in TV news cannot be well explained by economic influences in contrast to topic coverage, foreign news coverage and sensationalism. Second, the present study is to my knowledge the first study in comparative media and communication research to use qualitative comparative analysis as the main methodological approach. QCA provides the possibility to identify patterns of causal relationship between causal conditions and outcome – here economic influences and news performance – in small-N and medium-N analyses which do not allow rigorous statistical analyses. Given that the data basis for most

comparative media research studies is hierarchical in nature¹²³ but the sample size on the different levels in the data structure is almost always too small to meet statistical requirements for analysis methods such as multi-level modelling,¹²⁴ QCA enables to investigate variable relations even within a rather small sample. However, QCA should not only be regarded as a mere substitute inferior to conventional statistics; the method also allows the researcher to focus on the identity of cases and thus provides insights into individual cases which is often one main goal of small-N and medium-N analyses.

All this said, QCA has some limitations that must be acknowledged. The method allows to include only a limited number of causal conditions in the range of three to eight (Ragin, 2008b) as analyses involving more causal conditions are likely to provide too complex and thus hardly interpretable solutions. As news performance is not only influenced by economic factors, but also by non-economic conditions such as political parallelism or the degree of journalistic professionalism in a country, a major concern is whether the method is able to incorporate these additional causal conditions into the analysis. Furthermore, as the method is not yet established in comparative media research, no benchmarks for determining fuzzy set membership are available. Due to this lack of benchmarks, decisions made in this study as how to determine set membership might be somewhat arbitrary. The only possibility to alleviate this problem lays in future studies applying QCA in media and communication research so that generally accepted benchmarks might emerge.

7.2 Major results

The most significant result to emerge from this study is that news performance of public service TV channels depends highly on the market environment they operate in and on the extent of their dependency on advertising revenues. Although the “commercial deluge” has caused them large audience losses in the last two decades, all Western European public

¹²³ For example, the present study operates with independent variables on two levels: characteristics of TV channels and features of market environment. Another example is internationally comparative journalist surveys with independent variables on three levels: individual characteristics of journalists, organizational characteristics of the media they work for and country characteristics.

¹²⁴ For higher-level variables, the sample size requirement is at least 30 groups (Hanitzsch, 2009).

service channels in the present study's sample still enjoy a comparatively strong position on the audience market and a generally high acceptance within society at large. Even though some of these channels have to derive large proportions of their income from advertising revenues, the main source of their income still consists of the license fee or government subsidies. It appears that the political and financial privileges they enjoy give the public TV channels in Belgium, Germany, Italy, Portugal and Switzerland the necessary protection from market pressures. Thus, these channels can afford to largely ignore supposedly topics supposedly attractive to a mass audience but of low social relevance and to refrain from a sensationalist style of reporting to increase their audience shares. Instead, they can focus on their public service remit by providing the audience with adequate or in some cases even substantial amounts of information on political and economic issues and informing citizens in their countries about international events and issues in a wide range of different countries. The same findings also apply to the Polish public channel TVP1 that only changed from a state-run to a public service channel in 1993 and that relies on advertising revenues to a large degree while income from the license fee constitutes only one third of its income. The case of TVP1 implies that even in a country without a long history of public service broadcasting, a public channel with a strong position on the market and some financial support via license fee is still able to perform well with respect to TV news.

The remaining public service channels in the sample operate in a highly commercialized market environment with a weak or even marginal position for public service broadcasting. These channels can be differentiated according to the degree of their advertising dependency: the public broadcasters in Israel, Taiwan and the USA do not have any advertising income whereas the Canadian public channel CBC derives a third of its revenues from advertising and the Chilean channel TVN is completely financed by advertising.

The USA and Taiwan are two countries in which public service broadcasting has always played a marginal role with very limited scale and impact. Accordingly, both public channels cater for a niche audience not served by their commercial competitors. This is reflected by both channel's distinct news profile characterized by a highly strong focus on internal politics, a lack of attention to topics with mass appeal but socially less relevant, and a non-sensationalist reporting style. Their news reporting is restricted largely to events and issues in their own country and does not offer a broad mix of domestic and foreign news like

European public broadcasters. In fact, PTS and PBS occupy exactly that kind of niche positions which Western European public service channels have struggled to avoid since the introduction of commercial broadcasting in their countries. The former monopolist in Israel, the public broadcaster IBA, appears to have lost the struggle. IBA's profile resembles that of PTS and PBS both with regard to its news performance and a lack of popularity with the audience as the channel's newscast has lost the majority of audience to commercial competitors. It remains to be seen which direction the public channel will take after the upcoming reform and restructuring.

The completely advertising-based Chilean public channel TVN pursues a strategy European public service channels also want to refrain from, namely to engage in the struggle for audience shares by means of a popular news programming. TVN's news profile mirrors that of its commercial competitor Mega with a sensationalist reporting style and a strong focus on sports and other topics attractive to a mass audience at the expense of coverage of politics and economy. Compared to TVN, the Canadian public channel CBC still retains some features of a public service profile by means of a mixed news programme. Despite its high level of coverage of topics of rather low social relevance and a relatively high sensationalist style of reporting, CBC also pays attention to politics and economy and to international news, albeit with a strong focus on the USA.

In short, it appears that the market environment public service channels operate in and the degree to which they derive revenues from advertising exert a great influence on these channels' news performance. European public service channels enjoying a strong position on the audience market and some financial protection from market pressures display the highest news performance. Public broadcasters in Israel, Taiwan and the USA occupy a marginal position and exhibit a narrow news profile directed to a niche audience. The public channels in Canada and Chile are highly dependent on advertising revenues and audience shares and thus embrace a more market-based strategy of news programming.

Another main finding is the negative influence a commercialized market environment has on foreign news coverage. In this study, a commercialized market environment is defined as a competitive television market which highly depends on advertising expenditures and in which public service broadcasting occupies an only weak position. This kind of market environment is largely found in the non-European countries in the sample: Canada, Chile,

Israel, Taiwan and the USA. TV channels in these countries mostly devote very little airtime to cover international news and cover a quite narrow range of different countries in their foreign news, regardless of their ownership structure. This finding not only corroborates studies on foreign news in the USA but also signifies that the same relationship between economic influences and low foreign news coverage can be found in other countries. Thus, in countries with a commercialized television system, Hoge's provocative question can be rightly asked: "Foreign news. Who gives a damn?" (1997).

A third important finding refers to the effect of commercial ownership on news performance. Commercial TV channels in the Democratist Corporatist and Liberal countries in the sample (BEL_VTM, GER_RTL, CDN_CTV, USA_NBC) as well as in Chile (Mega) and Taiwan (TVBS) show remarkable similarities in their news coverage despite the different degree of commercialization in their market environment. Most of these channels devote little airtime to cover politics and economy and a comparatively large proportion of their news hole to cover topics supposedly attractive to a mass audience but of low social relevance, and also employ a highly sensationalist style of reporting to attract audience. On the U.S. channel NBC and the Taiwanese channel TVBS, the topic coverage in the analyzed newscast is dominated by the then ongoing elections in these countries, but the high degree of sensationalism in their TV news clearly distinguishes them from their public counterparts. Interestingly, there is no difference in news performance between channels whose shares are publicly traded and channels that are not quoted on the stock market. Thus, profit pressures exerted by commercial ownership appear to be invariably high regardless of the legal structure of the company.

Commercial TV channels in Israel, Italy, Poland and Portugal perform slightly better than the aforementioned commercial channels in several aspects. In the case of ISR_Arutz2, the higher news performance might be attributed to the channel's particular ownership structure (cf. Chapter 6.2.9). The finding that the news profiles of ITA_Canale5, POL_TVN and POR_TVI are somewhat similar is quite remarkable, given that Italy and Portugal are the two Polarized Pluralist countries in the sample and the Polish media system shares many features of the Polarized Pluralist model. According to Hallin and Mancini (2004), journalism in Mediterranean countries has developed more as an extension of the worlds of literature and politics than of the market and that the position of commercial media is comparatively weak

due to integration of the media into party politics and a strong role of the state. In fact, the news performance of these three commercial channels cannot be consistently explained by economic influences, as particularly ITA_Canale5 and POL_TV_N were very rarely identified in the QCA results. It can however only be speculated about whether this finding might indeed be traced back to weak commercial influences and high politicization in the Polarized Pluralist model.

7.3 Limitations and future avenues of research

The present study has some important limitations that must be acknowledged. The first limitation results from the fact that news content data for this study are provided by the large scale international project Foreign News on TV. On the one hand, there is the clear benefit of access to a large dataset that is more extensive than in most previously conducted content analyses of TV news. On the other hand, there are a number of disadvantages that have to be pointed out. First, the country sample depends on whether or not national teams are able to take part in the project. Thus, there are for example no data available for the United Kingdom; given the strong public service broadcasting tradition in the UK, it would have been illuminating to investigate how the BBC and the commercial network ITV fare with regard to TV news. Second, due to the extensive amount of coding required, only two TV channels are included in the content analysis, namely the most heavily viewed public and commercial TV channel in each country. Therefore, it was not possible to select TV channels according to characteristics of interest. For example, almost all commercial TV channels in the present study's sample are part of a larger media conglomerate so that it was not possible to compare group-owned with independent media outlets, even though this difference in ownership structure is one frequently mentioned issue in the discussion of commercialization. The same applies to the question of whether the extent to which TV channels conduct market research on news audience exerts an influence on their news performance. Except for the two Taiwanese channels, all TV channels in the sample conduct market research on a regular basis so that a systematic comparison between market-oriented TV channels and those with a low degree of market-orientation was not possible.

Another limitation of this study is the lack of a more in-depth analysis of TV news. Although the operationalization of news performance in this study already considers different

dimensions of TV news, there are still other aspects of news that cannot be investigated by the data at hand. For example, high news performance is measured by the quantity of coverage of politics and economy or foreign news, but it is not possible to analyze these news reports' informativeness and analytical depth. These concepts refer to the extent to which news reports present all relevant information, including current and background information, organized coherently such that the audience can understand the social and political significance of the events being reported. Future research should take informativeness and analytical depth of news reports into account, as these qualities of news might also be negatively affected by economic constraints. This is because the urge to produce news at lowest possible costs leads to a great reliance on outside sources such as press conference and press material at the expense of independent investigation and analysis (Croteau & Hoynes, 2001; Heinrich, 2001a). News reports that are episodic and fragmented (Iyengar, 1991) lack background information which helps the audience understand the reason behind news events and to put them into the proper framework of their social and political significance.

A more detailed analysis taking into account news reports' informativeness and analytical depth might help establish a more differentiated assessment of news performance among European public service broadcasters which all fare well in the present study. As the public broadcasters in Italy, Poland, and Portugal are all more dependent on advertising revenues than their counterparts in Belgium, Germany and Switzerland, the open question is whether this higher ad-dependency affects these public broadcasters' ability to provide in-depth information, particularly with regard to foreign news.

There might also be strong differences between European public broadcasters within the area of political coverage that could not be detected by the present analysis, albeit these differences cannot necessarily be attributed to economic influences. According to Hallin and Mancini (2004), television journalists in Mediterranean countries tend to report in a relatively passive way and leave it to representatives of political parties and other organized groups to interpret the political reality. Given the high degree of political parallelism and instrumentalization of mass media in these countries – with Berlusconi's media imperium being a case in point – it is important to take into consideration whether news reports in these countries are neutral and balanced in the sense that representatives of different

political parties and socially relevant groups are granted access to voice their standpoint. This question can of course also be asked for TV news reports in Democratic Corporatist and Liberal countries.

The discussion of the present study's limitations shows that future research on economic influences on news should on the one hand broaden the scope of the data base and on the other hand deepen the analysis. The first strategy involves including further countries into the sample in order to validate this study's findings in other national contexts. Given the main results discussed above, these could be countries with strong public service broadcasting tradition such as the United Kingdom or Scandinavian countries which are not represented in this study at all, or countries with consequently commercialized television systems similar to Chile, or, ideally, both types of countries. In addition, broadening the data base could also be achieved by investigating more TV channels in the countries already analyzed. With more variance in the sample regarding channel characteristics such as ownership structure (group-owned vs. independent media outlets) and the degree of market-orientation, it will be possible to gain deeper insights into the explanatory power of channel characteristics regarding news performance and to compare this with influences exerted by the market environment.

The second strategy aiming at a more in-depth analysis might include further aspects of news performance such as informativeness and analytical depth, as noted above. Another direction of research points to the explanation of the relationship between economic conditions and news performance. In this study, it could be confirmed that economic factors indeed influence TV news, but it is not clear how this relationship is established. Profit pressures might be exerted by a channel's owner, but how do these pressures translate into e.g. a sensationalist style of reporting? After all, it is journalists who decide which news events to cover and how to cover them. Given that the micro level of individual journalists is not addressed by this study, including this perspective will certainly prove fruitful. In-depth interviews with journalists and ethnographic approaches involving newsroom observations might provide valuable insights into how influences on the macro and meso level are realized in individual journalists' work.

Both directions of research just outlined are possible and worthwhile, but also involve significant further efforts of data collection and analysis. The first strategy is probably more

appealing to researchers interested in comparative media research while the second strategy can best be employed by researchers more interested in journalism studies.

7.4 Concluding remarks

In the first chapter of this study, I referred to Nichols and McChesney's suggestion of granting government subsidies to non-profit and non-commercial media to save American journalism (Nichols & McChesney, 2010). If the goal is to ensure that the news media meet their civic responsibilities of serving the public interest and promoting active citizenship, then the findings of this study lend strong support to their proposal.

Public service broadcasters that enjoy strong political, legal and financial backing have the necessary cushion to deliver a steady flow of substantive news on important political, economic and social developments, both domestic and international. They do compete with commercial channels, but being in part protected from market pressures, they can afford to make programming decisions without the constant need to look at market shares. The analyzed public channels in Germany and Switzerland provide illustrative examples of a "virtuous circle": being in a secure legal, political, and financial position, these channels can well afford to maintain a public service news profile with substantive, high quality news that is appreciated by the audience. Success on the audience market in turn reinforces the public broadcasters' position.

Empirical evidence shows that preference of public television goes hand-in-hand with greater political knowledge (Bonfadelli & Marr, 2008; Holtz-Bacha & Norris, 2001). Thus, if it is true that "democracy functions best when its citizens are politically informed" (Carpini & Keeter, 1996, p. 1), then this study indeed makes a strong case for the Western European model of public service broadcasting.

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Appendix A: Foreign News on TV Project Members

Project coordination: Akiba Cohen (Tel Aviv University)

Belgium	Knut De Swert, Ruud Wouters (Universiteit Antwerpen)
Brazil	Jacques Alkalai Wainberg (Pontifícia Universidade Católica do Rio Grande do Sul)
Canada	Abby Goodrum, Elizabeth Godó (Ryerson University)
Chile	Constanza Mujica, William Porath, (Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile)
China	Joseph Chan (Chinese University of Hong Kong), Baohua Zhou (Fudan University)
Egypt	Rasha Kamhawi (University of Florida)
Germany	Jürgen Wilke, Christine Heimprecht (Johannes Gutenberg-Universität Mainz) Thorsten Quandt, Thilo von Pape (Universität Hohenheim)
Hong Kong	Francis Lee (City University of Hong Kong)
Israel	Akiba Cohen, Alon Kraitzman (Tel Aviv University)
Italy	Paolo Mancini, Marco Mazzoni (Università di Perugia)
Japan	Youichi Ito (Keio University)
Poland	Agnieszka Stepinska (Adam-Mickiewicz-Universität Posen)
Portugal	Joel Silveira, António Bélo (Instituto Politécnico de Lisboa)
Singapore	Eddie Kuo, Xiaoge Xu (Nanyang Technological University)
Switzerland	Heinz Bonfadelli, Thomas Hanitzsch, Michael Bauer, Hong Nga Nguyen Vu (University of Zurich)
Taiwan	Ven-hwei Lo Herng Su, Tai-Li Wang (National Chengchi University)
USA	David Weaver, Lars Willnat (Indiana University)

Appendix B: Codebook for Content Analysis - Foreign News on TV

Project

ITEMIZATION

The itemization of each newscast should be done by the researcher him/herself, before the coding, according to the following guidelines. Distinguishing between items is based on two criteria: content and/or format.

Content: A new item is identified when the issue and/or topic and/or country/location changes.

Illustrative examples:

- When presenting a studio interview with a leading persona, a change from one topic to another topic constitutes different items. However, there must be a clear shift and not just a subtle or gradual shift.
- When reporting on a major storm, reporting from different locations constitute different items.
- When reporting a “block” of foreign news events in sequence, each event is considered as a separate item, even if there is no separate formal introduction of each item by the anchor or reporter.
- When reporting on a world summit conference, reactions in each capital city constitute separate items.

Format: A new item is identified following a formal breaking point (usually an intervention by a news anchor, but not including separate interview questions) regardless of the content.

Illustrative examples:

- An edited news report, usually with (but sometimes without) voice-over. Such a report, together with the news anchor’s introduction, and possibly a short comment afterwards, constitutes a separate item regardless of the content prior to or following it.
- An item in a “block” of items (e.g. in foreign news block – see above) separated from other items by brief visual indication (flash, fading, etc.) or by a specific sound.
- A brief items delivered by anchor only, possibly accompanied by some kind of visual in background (e.g., photo, logo, moving image, etc.).
- A live (or taped) in-studio interview with non-journalist. If such an interview is interspersed by an edited report, each segment of the interview and edited report constitute a separate item.

- An in-studio interview with a home-journalist (or commentator) constitutes a separate item. If such an interview is interspersed by an edited report, each segment of the interview and edited report constitute a separate item.
- A live or taped interview or intervention with stand-up journalists (on location) constitutes a separate item. If the stand-up introduces an edited report (usually made by him/herself or a local team), this is considered part of the same item. In rare cases where the stand-up takes over the role of the anchor (e.g., by introducing edited reports), this constitutes a separate item.

Note: Items that are part of “blocs” of items will be indicated as such in variable #13.

1. COUNTRY OF BROADCAST (Codes here refer to countries)

1. Belgium
2. Brazil
4. Canada
5. Chile
6. China
7. Egypt
9. Germany
10. Hong Kong
11. Israel
12. Italy
14. Poland
15. Portugal
16. Singapore
19. Switzerland
20. Taiwan
22. United States

2. STATION CODE

[] Enter 1, 2 or 3 as an identifier for the specific station of your country. Conversion to the actual station code will be done later.

3. DATE OF NEWSCAST [][]

Enter 1-28 for the code of the date (e.g., 1 would represent January 20; 10 would represent February 12th, etc. Conversion to the actual date will be done later.

4. ITEM SEQUENCE IN LINE-UP [][]

Order in line-up, from 1st to nth

5. KEY WORD DESCRIPTOR OF ITEM

Enter in English key words up to 20 characters (to enable cross-country identification of items). Use the same key words in subsequent newscasts when dealing with items on the same event/issue.

In addition to the coding form, please create a separate cumulative list of all items.

TOPICS OF ITEMS

This is a variable of prime importance. The list of topics that we developed is very detailed, so that hopefully we identify the most relevant topic to each item. However, given this detailing also creates the possibility that an item would suitably be coded as being relevant to more than one topic. For this reason we allow the coding of as many as three topics. The decision as to how to code the topics is left up to the coder, of course, and it really doesn't matter in which order they are entered. Finally, a coder may define a new topic code by adding it to the list. This should be done only in limited cases, however.

6. TOPIC 1 (The first code must be entered using the code number from the topic list)

7. TOPIC 2 (Code here only if item has second topic, also using code number from topic list)

8. TOPIC 3 (Code here only if item has a third topic, also using code number from topic list)

9. IS ITEM MENTIONED IN HEADLINE OF NEWSCASTS?

Headlines constitute brief mentions of items at the beginning of the newscast referring to what will be coming later in the newscast.

1. Yes
2. No
3. No headlines at all in newscast

10. IS ITEM MENTIONED IN PROMO DURING NEWSCAST?

A promo is a reference made during the newscast about an item that will be reported later (often made before commercials).

1. Yes
2. No
3. No promo at all in newscast

11. IS ITEM MENTIONED IN RECAP OF NEWSCAST?

A recap may appear at the end of the newscast in which the anchor repeats in brief (and sometimes as a late update) some of the items that were previously reported.

1. Yes

2. No
3. No recap of newscast at all
12. DOES ITEM EXPLICITLY REFER TO ANOTHER TV PROGRAM OF THE STATION?
The reference could be another newscast, a current affairs program or any other program aired on the same station (sometimes as a promo to that program).
 1. Yes, to another newscast (such as one to be broadcast later)
 2. Yes, to a current affairs program
 3. Yes, to any other program
 4. No
13. IS ITEM PART OF A BLOCK OF NEWS ITEMS?
A block is a groups of items presented sequentially without a separate introduction to each item (e.g., several “foreign events”, each of which is a totally different item (that would presumably also get different topic codes, or reports from different locations of the same major weather storm). In other words, a “block” is mostly a structural or format concept.
 1. Yes
 2. No
14. DURATION OF ITEM [][] (In seconds)
15. IS/ARE ANCHOR(S) SEEN OR ONLY HEARD?
(In some stations there is more than one anchor; refer similarly to one or more)
 1. Yes, anchor is seen speaking
 2. Yes, anchor is seen during part of item but there is also his/her voice over
 3. Yes, anchor is only heard speaking as voice over
 4. No, anchor is not seen or heard at all
16. DOES REPORTER OR COMENTATOR REPORT FROM STUDIO?
This can be any studio of the station of broadcast: the major studio, a studio in another city of the country, or even in another country.
 1. Yes
 2. No
17. DOES/DO ANCHOR(S) INTERVIEW REPORTER IN STUDIO?
 1. Yes
 2. No
18. DOES/DO ANCHOR(S) INTERVIEW REPORTER WHO IS NOT IN STUDIO?
 1. Yes
 2. No
19. DOES INTERVIEW WITH NON-JOURNALIST TAKE PLACE IN STUDIO?
 1. Yes
 2. No

20. IS THERE A PRE-RECORDED VIDEO (OR FILMED) REPORT FROM THE LOCATION OF THE EVENT (USUALLY WITH VOICE OVER) AND PRESENTED BY THE STATION'S REPORTER?
Some indication must be present to indicate that it is pre-recorded (not "live"); otherwise code as "cannot determine."
1. Yes
2. No
3. Cannot determine
21. IS THERE A LIVE REPORT FROM THE SCENE OF THE EVENT?
Some indication must be present to indicate that it is a live report; otherwise code as "cannot determine."
1. Yes
2. No
3. Cannot determine
22. DOES A REPORTER APPEAR IN A "STAND-UP" IN EITHER A LIVE OR VIDEO (OR FILMED) REPORT FROM THE LOCATION OF THE EVENT (AS REFERENCED IN VARIABLES 20 AND 21 ABOVE)?
1. Yes
2. No
23. IS ARCHIVE (OR "FILE") MATERIAL USED?
1. Yes, material clearly labeled as such
2. Yes, most likely archive material used but with no formal indication
3. No
4. Cannot determine if it is archive material
24. IS STORY AND/OR VISUAL MATERIAL CLAIMED TO BE EXCLUSIVE?
1. Yes
2. No
25. IS THERE VISUAL MATERIAL FROM INTERNATIONAL BROADCASTER?
Some indication must be present to indicate that it is material from international broadcaster; otherwise code as "cannot determine."
1. No
2. Yes, from CNN
3. Yes, from BBC
4. Yes, from Al-Jazeera
5. Yes, from other international broadcaster
6. Cannot determine
26. IS ANY MATERIAL FROM NEWS AGENCY (E.G., REUTERS) USED IN ITEM?
Some indication must be present to indicate that it is material from news agency; otherwise code as "cannot determine."
1. Yes

2. No
 3. Cannot determine
27. IS THERE VISUAL MATERIAL FROM ANOTHER STATION?
- Some indication must be present to indicate that it is material from another TV station, but not an international broadcaster (as in 24 above) or news agency (as in 25 above); otherwise code as “cannot determine.”
1. Yes
 2. No
 3. Cannot determine
28. ARE THERE TABLES AND/OR CHARTS?
- These can be computer generated or otherwise.
1. Yes
 2. No
29. IS THERE USE OF STILL PHOTOS?
- This could be a still photograph or a “frozen” frame from a video; it can be presented “behind” the anchor or reporter in the studio or within a moving video segment.
1. Yes
 2. No
30. IS THERE USE OF PICTORIAL OR GRAPHIC REPRESENTATION?
- A pictorial or graphic metaphor is an artist-created “abstract” visual image (but not a photo, official logo, etc.) used for representing some idea, issue, etc.
1. Yes
 2. No
31. IS THERE USE OF AN ANIMATED REPRESENTATION?
- Use of artist-created images to illustrate or simulate information using animation (moving images).
1. Yes
 2. No
32. IS THERE USE OF PRINTED TEXT?
- Printed text refers to information on the screen such as a document (or part thereof) or computer generated “typing” of text (e.g., a quote) while a voice-over narrates the text or printed key words.
1. Yes
 2. No
33. IS THERE USE OF MAPS OF CITY, COUNTRY, REGION, ETC?
1. Yes
 2. No

34. IS THERE USE OF COUNTRY FLAG OR EMBLEM?
1. Yes
2. No
35. IS THERE USE OF A COMPANY LOGO?
1. Yes
2. No
36. USE OF BACKGROUND MUSIC IN ITEM?
The use of music that is not germane to the item, such as dramatic or suspenseful music presented as “background” for an item.
1. Yes
2. No
37. TIME SHIFT: SLOW MOTION IN ITEM?
Showing video in slow motion.
1. Yes
2. No
38. TIME SHIFT: SPEEDED UP MOTION IN ITEM?
Showing video in faster than normal speed.
1. Yes
2. No
39. REPETITION OF SAME VISUALS OVER AND OVER?
Presenting the same brief video segment again and again
1. Yes
2. No
40. USE OF GORY VISUALS?
Visuals considered gruesome according to local cultural standards.
1. Yes [If yes, please note details of visuals in separate log file]
2. No
41. USE OF SOFT FOCUS?
Images shown with a blurred focus, often used to prevent the identification of the person or act being shown.
1. Yes
2. No
42. USE OF COLOR CHANGE?
Change of color to high contrast or black and white as visual effect
1. Yes
2. No

43. USE OF DIGITIZATION TO CONCEAL IDENTITY OF PEOPLE?
Electronic digitization of face to conceal the identity of a person or persons.
1. Yes
 2. No
44. USE OF AUDIO WITH DISTORTED HUMAN VOICE?
Distorting a person's voice (often in an interview) to avoid recognition.
1. Yes
 2. No
45. PRESENTATION OF EXTREME EMOTION?
The reference is to display of extreme human emotion according to local cultural standards.
1. Yes [If yes, please note details of visuals in separate log file]
 2. No
46. TIME PERSPECTIVE – REFERENCE TO PAST (code the longest past)
1. No (current day only)
 2. Previous day
 3. Previous week or several days
 4. Previous month or so
 5. Previous year or so
 6. Reference to more than one year ago
 7. General unspecific reference to past
 8. Cannot determine time frame
47. TIME PERSPECTIVE – REFERENCE TO FUTURE (code the furthest future)
1. No (current day only)
 2. Next day
 3. Next few days or week
 4. Next month or so
 5. Next year or so
 6. Reference to more than one year in the future
 7. General unspecific reference to future
 8. Cannot determine time frame
48. GEOGRAPHIC SCOPE OF EVENT (To be determined by the coder's understanding – e.g.: an electrical blackout in a city, in a region, in a whole country; a storm that in a region, the entire country or a world region)
1. City/town
 2. Region
 3. Country
 4. World-region (e.g., Europe, far east)
 5. Worldwide
 6. Cannot determine

49. POTENTIAL IMPACT OF EVENT (Refers to the broadest consequences of the event, based on an explicit reference it the item; usually the impact would be equal to the scope of the event or greater – e.g., a strike of air traffic controllers in a certain country could impact on world-regional or worldwide travel. If there is no explicit reference to the impact, code as 6)

1. City/town
2. Region
3. National
4. World-region (e.g., Europe, far east)
5. Worldwide
6. No explicit indication of impact in item
7. Cannot determine

50. NATURE OF EVENT **(IF CODE IS 1 – GO TO VARIABLE 66)**

1. Domestic (event takes place in country of broadcast with no foreign involvement)
2. Domestic with foreign involvement (event takes place in country of broadcast but specific reference is made to at least one other country)
3. Foreign with domestic involvement (event takes place in other country but specific reference is made to country of broadcast)
4. Foreign (event takes place in other country without any reference to country of broadcast)
5. Cannot determine

- 51-53. COUNTRY OF LOCATION OF EVENT

Most items relate to a single country location. However, sometimes the event can take place in two or more countries (e.g., a major disaster, war, etc.). Determining whether or not the event actually takes place in more than one country is based on how the item was initially itemized by the researcher. The countries should be coded in the order in which they are mentioned in the item.

Country 1 Use country list

Country 2 Use country list

Country 3 Use country list

54. DOES COUNTRY OF LOCATION BORDER ON COUNTRY OF BROADCAST?

This refers to whether or not the countries are neighbors.

1. Yes, all countries listed above border on country of broadcast
2. Yes, some of the countries listed above border on country of broadcast
3. Yes, only one of the countries listed above borders on country of broadcast
4. No country listed above borders on country of broadcast
5. Country listed above is country of broadcast

55-59. COUNTRIES INVOLVED IN EVENT

The countries should be coded in the order in which they are mentioned and/or referred to in the item, directly or indirectly. For example: If an item says something like “Tony Blair said he would not give in to the demands of Iran” without specifically mentioning the United Kingdom by name, nonetheless the UK should be coded.

Country 1 Use country list

Country 2 Use country list

Country 3 Use country list

Country 4 Use country list

Country 5 Use country list

60-61. INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION INVOLVED

The countries should be coded in the order in which they are mentioned in the item.

Organization 1 Use List of Int’l Organizations

Organization 2 Use List of Int’l Organizations

62. DOMESTICATION – USE OF MAPS (the use of maps here must indicate a relationship between where the event took place and the country of broadcast; e.g., two maps presented, one of the country of broadcast and one of the other country)

1. Yes
2. No

63. DOMESTICATION – USE OF LOGOS (the use of logos here must indicate a relationship between where the event took place and the country of broadcast; e.g., two logos presented, one of the country of broadcast and one of the other country or logos of different companies in the two countries)

1. Yes
2. No

64. DOMESTICATION – MAKING EXPLICIT REFERENCE TO NATIONALS OF COUNTRY OF BROADCAST (Only relevant to foreign items with domestic involvement)

1. Yes
2. No

65. DOMESTICATION – MAKING EXPLICIT REFERENCE TO IMPACT ON COUNTRY OF BROADCAST (Only relevant to foreign items with domestic involvement)

1. Yes
2. No

66. DOES ITEM DEAL WITH CONFLICT?
This variable is important but also somewhat difficult to define in unequivocal terms. Many items in the news involve conflict. Some conflicts are interpersonal involving individual people and many are social in the sense that they deal with two or more parties (social groups, political parties, countries, etc.) who have incompatible goals or who use (or advocate the use of) different means to obtain their goals. For example, if a man kills his wife because she was (or he thinks she was) unfaithful, this would be an interpersonal conflict; also, if a man robs another person in order to get money for his drug habits, this is an interpersonal conflict. But if a single person (or group of people) robs a bank because (as they may claim) the bank symbolizes the capitalist society, this would be a social conflict. Elections, wars, strikes, etc., are also examples of social conflict. In short, in most cases it is quite easy to determine if the conflict is interpersonal or social. In cases where it is absolutely impossible to decide, please code as "cannot determine."
1. No (**IF CODE IS 1, GO TO VARIABLE 71**)
 2. Yes, interpersonal conflict
 3. Yes, social conflict
 4. Yes, but cannot determine the nature of the conflict
67. NUMBER OF PARTIES MENTIONED REGARDING THE CONFLICT [____]
(Opponents can be individual people, social groups, countries, etc. Refers only to opponents in conflict, not to arbitrators, mediators, etc.)
68. IS THERE A CALL FOR RESOLUTION OF CONFLICT IN ITEM?
1. Nobody calls for resolution
 2. Only arbitrator/mediator calls for resolution
 3. At least one opponent calls for resolution
 4. Two opponents or more call for resolution
 5. At least one opponent and arbitrator/mediator call for resolution
 6. Two or more opponents and arbitrator/mediator call for resolution
69. IS THERE REFERENCE IN ITEM TO NEGOTIATIONS TAKING PLACE?
1. No reference at all in item to negotiations
 2. Reference to negotiations that took place in the past only
 3. Specific reference indicating that no negotiations are taking place
 4. Attempts to get negotiations started
 5. Negotiations currently taking place
 6. Resolution of conflict reached following negotiations
70. IS THERE REFERENCE IN ITEM TO REJECTION OF NEGOTIATIONS, COMPROMISE OR RESOLUTION?
1. Nobody rejects negotiations, compromise or resolution
 2. At least one party rejects negotiations, compromise or resolution
 3. Two or more parties reject negotiations, compromise or resolution

71. IS THERE VERBALLY *REPORTED* PHYSICAL VIOLENCE AGAINST PEOPLE?
1. Yes
 2. No
72. IS THERE VISUALLY *SHOWN* PHYSICAL VIOLENCE AGAINST PEOPLE?
1. Yes
 2. No
73. IS THERE VERBALLY *REPORTED* KILLING OF AT LEAST ONE PERSON?
1. Yes (Go to 73a and enter number).
 2. No (Go to 74)
 3. Yes, but no specific number (Go to 74)
- 73a. NUMBER OF VERBALLY *REPORTED* PERSON(S) KILLED [][][]
(For 1000 or more, code 999)
74. IS THERE VISUALLY *SHOWN* KILLING (INCLUDING DEAD BODIES OR PARTS OF BODY/BODIES) OF AT LEAST ONE PERSON?
1. Yes (Go to 74a and enter number).
 2. No (Go to 75)
 3. Yes, but no specific number (Go to 75)
- 74a. NUMBER OF VISUALLY *SHOWN* PERSON(S) KILLED [][][]
(For 1000 or more, code 999)
75. IS THERE VERBALLY *REPORTED* WOUNDING OF AT LEAST ONE PERSON?
1. Yes (Go to 75a and enter number).
 2. No (Go to 76)
 3. Yes, but no specific number (Go to 76)
- 75a. NUMBER OF VERBALLY *REPORTED* PERSON(S) WOUNDED [][][]
(For 1000 or more, code 999)
76. IS THERE VISUALLY *SHOWN* ONE WOUNDED PERSON OR MORE?
1. Yes (Go to 76a and enter number).
 2. No (Go to 77)
 3. Yes, but no specific number (Go to 77)
- 76a. NUMBER OF VISUALLY *SHOWN* PERSON(S) KILLED [][][]
(For 1000 or more, code 999)
77. IS THERE VERBALLY *REPORTED* PHYSICAL DAMAGE TO PROPERTY?
1. Yes
 2. No

78. IS THERE VISUALLY *SHOWN* PHYSICAL DAMAGE TO PROPERTY?
1. Yes
 2. No
79. IS THERE VERBALLY *REPORTED* OTHER CONSEQUENCE OF VIOLENCE?
1. Yes
 2. No
80. IS THERE VISUALLY *SHOWN* OTHER CONSEQUENCE OF VIOLENCE?
1. Yes
 2. No

CODING OF ACTORS

Actors are defined as people who appear in the item (as individuals or as representing some entity, e.g., country, commercial firm, social group etc.). Actors can appear as speaking or as being quoted (directly or indirectly – e.g., “The president said: ‘we will not give in’” or “the president said that the United States would not give in”).

We will code all the identifiable actors. There are two forms of identification: (1) Actors who are verbally identified by reference to their name and/or with a visual caption on the screen; (2) well-known persons such as the country’s president where sometimes no formal identification is provided but the assumption is that the coder can identify this person with certainty.

We will not code actors who are only seen but not quoted. The assumption is that in most cases if an actor is seen but not heard (in his/her voice) there would at least be some reference to his/her identity. This would also be the case for groups of people (e.g., demonstrators, customers in a checkout lane in a store) who are not identified by name but they (or at least someone in the group) is quote, directly or indirectly).

For each actor, the following variables – A1 through A8 – should be coded. If you have a second actor, this one will be coded as B1 through B8, and so forth until the last actor that is coded.

The information about each subsequent actor after the first actor will be entered as additional fields. If you will be using the scan-ready coding forms you will need to use one set of codes per actor (each on a separate line). If you are using direct data entry into an SPSS or EXCEL file you will need to allocate additional fields as necessary, 8 fields per actor, one after the other.

A1. Role of actor Use actor role list

A2. Is actor an individual or a group 1=individual 2=group

- A3. Gender of actor ☐ 1=female 2=male 3=both
4= Cannot determine/not relevant
- A4. Actor's country or organization ☐☐☐ Use Country/Organization list,
0=Cannot determine
- A5. Does actor speak in item? ☐ 1=No
2=Yes, in language of broadcast country
3=Yes, in other language with dubbing
4=Yes, in other language with subtitles
5=Yes, in other language with no translation
- A6. How long does actor speak? ☐☐☐ (in seconds, including all clips if
there is more than one clip)
- A7. Is actor quoted (directly or indirectly) in item? ☐ 1=No
2=Yes, and seen
3=Yes, but not seen
- A8. Is actor identified with by name and/or role? ☐ 1=No
2=Yes, by name only
3=Yes, by role only
4=Yes, by name and role

Appendix C: Topic Codes - Foreign News on TV Project

1 Politics

Internal politics

- Legislative activities (e.g., discussion of a new law)
- Executive activities (e.g., announcement by the president)
- Judicial decisions
- Constitutional issues
- Elections
- Political fundraisers and donations
- Political appointments
- Statements and activities of individual politicians
- Inter-party relations
- Internal party relations
- Activities of interest groups
- Referendum
- Public opinion/polling
- Abuse of political power, corruption
- Abortion
- Commission of inquiry
- Resignation of politician
- Fall of government – vote of no confidence

International politics

- Activities of international political organizations
- Activities of individual politicians
- Activities of political parties
- Diplomatic visits
- Diplomatic negotiations and agreements
- Promises of aid or cooperation
- Policy statements
- Wars between countries
- International tensions and disagreements
- International terrorism
- Embargo

Military and defense

- Military activities
- Appointments and firings in the military
- Government defense policy and action
- Protest at government defense policy

2 Economy

Economy: general

- State of economy
- Economic indexes (e. g. , domestic production numbers)
- Job market
- Appointments
- Fiscal measures
- Budget issues
- Natural resources
- Monopolies
- Tariffs
- Economic legal issues
- Donations
- Stock market situation (not regular stock quotes)

Labor and industrial relations

- Union activities (e g , lobbying)
- Disputes
- Strikes
- Legal measures and policy
- Foreign/guest workers – policy
- Relations between employer associations and workers
- Foreign/guest workers – condition of workers

Business, commerce, industry

- Business activities
- Legal measures and policy
- International business
- Globalization
- Stock market
- Mergers and acquisitions
- E-commerce
- Technology
- Tourism
- Agriculture
- Trade with foreign countries
- Appointments and firings

3 Social issues

Transportation

- Transportation infrastructure/transportation systems
- Public transportation issues
- Automobiles
- Driving behavior
- Driving conditions
- Parking issues
- Aviation
- Railway/trains/subway
- Transportation-related construction

Health, welfare, social services

- State of health system
- Health policies and legal measures
- Health insurance issues
- Health epidemic
- New medications
- New health technology or medical practice
- Social services – policy
- Social services – conditions
- Social services – payments
- Non-profit organizations
- Benefit events for a good cause
- Health malpractice suits
- Poverty level
- Poverty conditions
- Health advice
- Success in rehabilitation
- Drug problems
- Prostitution, women trafficking

Population

- General population statistics
- Immigration
- Emigration
- Visa issues

Education

- General educational policy
- Funding of education
- Educational reform
- Preschool education

- Secondary education
- Higher Education (colleges and universities)
- Teacher training
- Teacher wages
- Students
- Parental issues
- Level of teaching and teaching standards
- School curriculum
- Relations between teachers and parents
- Relations between teachers and students
- Registration for school
- Opening and closing of schools
- Sectorial education (e. g., religious vs. secular)

Communication

- Industry-wide issues and statistics
- Journalism and media in general
- Newspapers
- Network television
- Cable television
- Radio
- Magazines
- Internet
- Phones/cell phones/mobile phones
- Media regulation
- Technical aspects of communication
- Satellite

Housing

- Housing supply
- Living conditions
- Construction
- Mortgages
- Building permits
- City planning
- Housing demolition

Social relations

- Gender relations
- Sexual orientation issues
- Ethnic relations
- Class relations
- Age differences
- Family relations
- Minority-majority relations

4 Culture, religion and ceremonies

Culture

- Classical music
- Popular music
- Theatre
- Opera
- Dance
- Film
- Photography
- Literature and poetry
- Painting and sculpturing
- Television shows
- Radio shows
- Museums
- General exhibits
- Festivals and competitions
- Prizes and awards
- Celebrities

Religion

- Religious holidays/ceremonies
- Religious proclamations by senior religious leaders
- Conflict between religious groups
- Religious tourism
- Holy places (conditions of)
- Holy places (archeological findings)

Ceremonies

- Official government/political ceremonies
- National holidays/ceremonies
- Ethnic ceremonies/commemorations
- Anniversaries of events

5 Environment and science

Environment

- Threats to environment (e.g., pollution)
- Activities of environmental organizations
- Garbage collection
- Conservation

Science and technology

- Standards
- Inventions
- Individual scientists
- Scientific organizations
- Computer issues
- Multimedia issues
- Space exploration
- Problems related to science/technology

Energy

- Energy supply
- Energy costs
- Technology development

6 Internal order

- Civil war
- Peaceful demonstrations
- Violent demonstrations
- Terrorism
- Crime levels
- Police management
- Espionage
- Fire brigade
- Prison conditions
- Corruption (not political)
- Police behavior
- White collar crime
- Judicial decisions
- Child abuse
- Pedophilia
- Violence against women/wives
- Violence against husbands
- Political assassinations
- Crime investigation
- Criminal association (e.g., Mafia)
- Fraud
- Political corruption
- Libel suit

7 Sports

- Results
- Training
- Records
- Individual athletes/coaches/teams
- Leagues
- Fans/supporters behavior
- Legal measures
- Appointments and firings
- Politics
- Olympic training
- Championships

8 Crime and violence

- Petit/small crimes
- Murder
- Robbery
- Assault
- Rape

9 Fashion and human interest

Fashion

- Fashion shows
- Beauty contests
- Models
- Fashion products
- Fashion trends (e. g., trend colors, body piercing)

Human interest

- Celebrities
- Non-celebrities
- Animal stories
- Travel stories
- Record attempts
- Supernatural or mystical stories
- Mystery
- Food
- Advice (e.g., on love, insurance, stock)
- Lottery results

Weather

- Weather maps and statistics
- Weather forecasting
- General weather stories (e.g., coldest winter)

10 Accidents and disasters

- Natural disasters – earthquakes
- Natural disaster – floods
- Natural disaster – famine
- Natural disaster – other weather
- Car accidents
- Plane crash
- Plane near accident
- Train accident
- Fire
- Work accident
- Military-related accident
- Home accident
- Crowd accident

Appendix C: Actor Codes - Foreign News on TV Project

1 Politics, military, economy: high status

- Head of State (president, king)
- Head of Parliament
- Prime minister
- Minister
- Parliamentary leaders, political party leader
- Head of regional government (or equivalent in each country)
- Mayors of large city
- Head of regulatory agency
- Head of commission of inquiry
- National candidate in election
- Foreign Head of State, senior minister or politician
- Ambassador
- Military leader in international forces
- Head of international organization
- Leader in group of people professing violence to achieve goals (e.g., terror)
- Head of regional group of countries (e.g., European Union)
- Head of ad hoc international mission (e.g., peace keepers)
- Military Leader, Chief of Staff (of single country)
- Head or high ranking officials of company
- Head of regulatory agency of business, commerce and industry
- Central Bank or Federal Reserve president
- Leader of trade union

2 Politics, military, economy: middle and low status

- Midlevel government officials
- Member of parliament, regional political leaders
- Local political leaders, members of political parties
- Member of regional government (or equivalent in each country)
- Mayors of small towns and other responsible for municipal affairs
- Member of commission of inquiry
- Official of commission of inquiry
- Regional candidate in election
- Local candidate in election
- Volunteers or activist in national organization
- Political analyst (but not journalist)
- Foreign government spokesperson
- Other diplomat
- High level of Army Officials

- Other officials and soldiers
- High ranking official of international organization
- Volunteers or activist in international organization
- Spokesperson of group professing violence to achieve goals (e.g., terror)
- Member of group professing violence to achieve goals (e.g., terror)
- Deputies or high-ranking staff members of regional group of countries
- Other members or experts of regional group of countries
- Journalists/observers reporting on ad hoc international mission
- Rank and file member of ad hoc international mission (e.g., peace keeper)
- Officer
- Soldier (non-officer)
- Other military or defense person
- Sales personnel, employee of large company
- Journalists/advocates of regulation in business, commerce and industry
- Investors
- Small business owner
- Employee of small business
- Central Bank or Federal Reserve council member
- Central Bank or Federal Reserve employee
- High ranking official of trade union
- Rank and file member of trade union or worker

3 Social issues, culture, environment, science, internal order: high status

- Head of police, fire fighters or other security/emergency service
- Chief of highest court
- Chief prosecutor
- Senior defense attorney
- Head or superintendent of jail
- Head or ranking official of transportation company (e.g., airline, Metro)
- Head of health or medical system (e.g., chief doctor or nurse; scientist)
- Head of drug company
- Head of social service agency or NGO
- Expert on demography
- Leader of immigrant or foreign community
- Head of university
- School principal
- Head of media organization, publisher
- Head of organization dealing with environment, animal protection, etc.
- National or international leader in science and technology
- Head of social relations organization (ethnic, religious, sex, elderly, etc.)
- Head of cultural organization
- Leading (internationally acclaimed) artists and performers (film, theatre, music, art)
- Top religious leader

4 Social issues, culture, environment, science, internal order: middle and low status

- Senior ranking persons in security/emergency organization
- Rank and file person in security/emergency organization
- Other judges
- Officials of court/judicial system
- High level attorney in prosecution
- Clerks in prosecution
- Medium level attorney
- Clerk in law office
- Corrections officer
- Expert in transportation
- Driver, pilot, crew member
- Health workers
- Worker in drug company or drug sales
- Worker in social service agency or NGO
- Official responsible for dealing with immigrants or foreigners
- Dean or department head
- Rank and file faculty members
- School teacher
- Editor, head of department
- Journalist, photographer
- Expert on environment
- Scientist or technology expert
- Technician
- Expert in the area of social relations
- Person involved in some social relations matter
- Artists and performers (film, theatre, music, art)
- Religious official (priest, rabbi, moslem cleric)

5 Sport, celebrities, royalties: high status

- Head of major team or sports federation
- Very famous athletes, coaches and referees
- King, queen
- Prince, princess, heir to throne
- Celebrities of great notoriety

6 Sport, celebrities, royalties: middle and low status

- Head of other sports organizations or teams
- Moderately famous athlete
- Lower level member of royal family
- Less famous celebrities

7 Member of the public

- Citizen of foreign country
- Prisoner, suspect, defendant
- Consumers
- Tourists
- Passenger, user of transportation
- Patient
- Consumer of drugs
- Consumer of social service agency or NGO
- Immigrant
- Refugee
- Student
- Environmental activists
- Supporters
- Amateur athlete
- Spectators
- Worshipper, believer
- Clearly identified “Man in the Street” opinion statement (“vox populi”)
- Person presented as “victim” of some event (crime, act of terror)
- Person presented as “survivor” of some event (fire, storm)
- Anonymous person
- Relative or close friend of victim
- Relative or close friend of protagonist
- Witness

Appendix E: Country List - Foreign News on TV Project

001	Abkhazia – Republic of Abkhazia
002	Afghanistan – Islamic Republic of Afghanistan
003	Akrotiri and Dhekelia – Sovereign Base Areas of Akrotiri and Dhekelia (UK)
004	Åland – Åland Islands (Autonomous province of Finland)
005	Albania – Republic of Albania
006	Algeria – People's Democratic Republic of Algeria
007	American Samoa – Territory of American Samoa (US territory)
008	Andorra – Principality of Andorra
009	Angola – Republic of Angola
010	Anguilla (UK overseas territory)
011	Antigua and Barbuda
012	Argentina – Argentine Republic
013	Armenia – Republic of Armenia
014	Aruba (Self-governing country in the Kingdom of the Netherlands)
015	Ascension Island (Dependency of the UK overseas territory of Saint Helena)
016	Australia – Commonwealth of Australia
017	Austria – Republic of Austria
018	Azerbaijan – Republic of Azerbaijan
019	Bahamas, The – Commonwealth of The Bahamas
020	Bahrain – Kingdom of Bahrain
021	Bangladesh – People's Republic of Bangladesh
022	Barbados
023	Belarus – Republic of Belarus
024	Belgium – Kingdom of Belgium
025	Belize
026	Benin – Republic of Benin
027	Bermuda (UK overseas territory)
028	Bhutan – Kingdom of Bhutan
029	Bolivia – Republic of Bolivia
030	Bosnia and Herzegovina
031	Botswana – Republic of Botswana
032	Brazil – Federative Republic of Brazil
033	Brunei – Negara Brunei Darussalam
034	Bulgaria – Republic of Bulgaria
035	Burkina Faso
036	Burundi – Republic of Burundi
037	Cambodia – Kingdom of Cambodia
038	Cameroon – Republic of Cameroon
039	Canada
040	Cape Verde – Republic of Cape Verde

041	Cayman Islands (UK overseas territory)
042	Central African Republic
043	Chad – Republic of Chad
044	Chile – Republic of Chile
045	China – People's Republic of China
046	Christmas Island – Territory of Christmas Island (Australia)
047	Cocos (Keeling) Islands – Territory of Cocos (Keeling) Islands (Australia)
048	Colombia – Republic of Colombia
049	Comoros – Union of the Comoros
050	Congo – Democratic Republic of the Congo
051	Congo – Republic of the Congo
052	Cook Islands (Associated state of New Zealand)
053	Costa Rica – Republic of Costa Rica
054	Côte d'Ivoire – Republic of Côte d'Ivoire
055	Croatia – Republic of Croatia
056	Cuba – Republic of Cuba
057	Cyprus – Republic of Cyprus
058	Czech Republic
059	Denmark – Kingdom of Denmark
060	Djibouti – Republic of Djibouti
061	Dominica – Commonwealth of Dominica
062	Dominican Republic
063	East Timor – Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste
064	Ecuador – Republic of Ecuador
065	Egypt – Arab Republic of Egypt
066	El Salvador – Republic of El Salvador
067	Equatorial Guinea – Republic of Equatorial Guinea
068	Eritrea – State of Eritrea
069	Estonia – Republic of Estonia
070	Ethiopia – Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia
071	Falkland Islands (UK overseas territory)
072	Faroe Islands (Self-governing country in the Kingdom of Denmark)
073	Fiji – Republic of the Fiji Islands
074	Finland – Republic of Finland
075	France – French Republic
076	French Polynesia (French overseas collectivity)
077	Gabon – Gabonese Republic
078	Gambia, The – Republic of The Gambia
079	Georgia
080	Germany – Federal Republic of Germany
081	Ghana – Republic of Ghana

082	Gibraltar (UK overseas territory)
083	Greece – Hellenic Republic
084	Greenland (Self-governing country in the Kingdom of Denmark)
085	Grenada
086	Guam – Territory of Guam (US organized territory)
087	Guatemala – Republic of Guatemala
088	Guernsey – Bailiwick of Guernsey (British Crown dependency)
089	Guinea – Republic of Guinea
090	Guinea-Bissau – Republic of Guinea-Bissau
091	Guyana – Co-operative Republic of Guyana
092	Haiti – Republic of Haiti
093	Honduras – Republic of Honduras
094	Hong Kong – Hong Kong (Special Administrative Region of China)
095	Hungary – Republic of Hungary
096	Iceland – Republic of Iceland
097	India – Republic of India
098	Indonesia – Republic of Indonesia
099	Iran – Islamic Republic of Iran
100	Iraq – Republic of Iraq
101	Ireland - Republic of Ireland
102	Isle of Man (British Crown dependency)
103	Israel – State of Israel
104	Italy – Italian Republic
105	Jamaica
106	Japan
107	Jersey – Bailiwick of Jersey (British Crown dependency)
108	Jordan – Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan
109	Kazakhstan – Republic of Kazakhstan
110	Kenya – Republic of Kenya
111	Kiribati – Republic of Kiribati
112	Korea, North – Democratic People's Republic of Korea
113	Korea, South – Republic of Korea
114	Kuwait – State of Kuwait
115	Kyrgyzstan – Kyrgyz Republic
116	Laos – Lao People's Democratic Republic
117	Latvia – Republic of Latvia
118	Lebanon – Republic of Lebanon
119	Lesotho – Kingdom of Lesotho
120	Liberia – Republic of Liberia
121	Libya – Great Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya

122	Liechtenstein – Principality of Liechtenstein
123	Lithuania – Republic of Lithuania
124	Luxembourg – Grand Duchy of Luxembourg
125	Macao – Macao Special Administrative Region of the China
126	Macedonia – Republic of Macedonia
127	Madagascar – Republic of Madagascar
128	Malawi – Republic of Malawi
129	Malaysia
130	Maldives – Republic of Maldives
131	Mali – Republic of Mali
132	Malta – Republic of Malta
133	Marshall Islands – Republic of the Marshall Islands
134	Mauritania – Islamic Republic of Mauritania
135	Mauritius – Republic of Mauritius
136	Mayotte – Departmental Collectivity of Mayotte (French)
137	Mexico – United Mexican States
138	Micronesia – Federated States of Micronesia
139	Moldova – Republic of Moldova
140	Monaco – Principality of Monaco
141	Mongolia
142	Montenegro – Republic of Montenegro
143	Montserrat (UK overseas territory)
144	Morocco – Kingdom of Morocco
145	Mozambique – Republic of Mozambique
146	Myanmar – Union of Myanmar (formerly Burma)
147	Nagorno-Karabakh – Nagorno-Karabakh Republic
148	Namibia – Republic of Namibia
149	Nauru – Republic of Nauru
150	Nepal – State of Nepal
151	Netherlands – Kingdom of the Netherlands
152	Netherlands Antilles (Self-governing in the Kingdom of the Netherlands)
153	New Caledonia – Territory of New Caledonia and Dependencies (French)
154	New Zealand
155	Nicaragua – Republic of Nicaragua
156	Niger – Republic of Niger
157	Nigeria – Federal Republic of Nigeria
158	Niue (Associated state of New Zealand)
159	Norfolk Island – Territory of Norfolk Island (Australian overseas territory)
160	Northern Cyprus – Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus
161	Northern Mariana Islands – Commonwealth of Northern Mariana Islands)
162	Norway – Kingdom of Norway
163	Oman – Sultanate of Oman

164	Pakistan – Islamic Republic of Pakistan
165	Palau – Republic of Palau
166	Palestine – proposed State of Palestine
167	Panama – Republic of Panama
168	Papua New Guinea – Independent State of Papua New Guinea
169	Paraguay – Republic of Paraguay
170	Peru – Republic of Peru
171	Philippines – Republic of the Philippines
172	Pitcairn Islands – Pitcairn, Henderson, Ducie, and Oeno Islands (UK)
173	Poland – Republic of Poland
174	Portugal – Portuguese Republic
175	Puerto Rico – Commonwealth of Puerto Rico (US commonwealth)
176	Qatar – State of Qatar
177	Romania
178	Russia – Russian Federation
179	Rwanda – Republic of Rwanda
180	Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic
181	Saint-Barthélemy – Collectivity of Saint-Barthélemy (French)
182	Saint Helena (UK overseas territory)
183	Saint Kitts and Nevis – Federation of Saint Christopher and Nevis
184	Saint Lucia
185	Saint Martin – Collectivity of Saint Martin (French overseas collectivity)
186	Saint Pierre and Miquelon – Collectivity of Saint Pierre & Miquelon (French)
187	Saint Vincent and the Grenadines
188	Samoa – Independent State of Samoa
189	San Marino – Most Serene Republic of San Marino
190	São Tomé and Príncipe – Democratic Republic of São Tomé and Príncipe
191	Saudi Arabia – Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
192	Senegal – Republic of Senegal
193	Serbia – Republic of Serbia
194	Seychelles – Republic of Seychelles
195	Sierra Leone – Republic of Sierra Leone
196	Singapore – Republic of Singapore
197	Slovakia – Slovak Republic
198	Slovenia – Republic of Slovenia
199	Solomon Islands
200	Somalia
201	Somaliland – Republic of Somaliland
202	South Africa – Republic of South Africa
203	South Ossetia – Republic of South Ossetia
204	Spain – Kingdom of Spain

205	Sri Lanka – Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka
206	Sudan – Republic of the Sudan
207	Suriname – Republic of Suriname
208	Svalbard (Territory of Norway)
209	Swaziland – Kingdom of Swaziland
210	Sweden – Kingdom of Sweden
211	Switzerland – Swiss Confederation
212	Syria – Syrian Arab Republic
213	Taiwan – Republic of China
214	Tajikistan – Republic of Tajikistan
215	Tanzania – United Republic of Tanzania
216	Thailand – Kingdom of Thailand
217	Togo – Togolese Republic
218	Tokelau (Overseas territory of New Zealand)
219	Tonga – Kingdom of Tonga
220	Transnistria - Transnistrian Moldovan Republic
221	Trinidad and Tobago – Republic of Trinidad and Tobago
222	Tristan da Cunha (Dependency of the UK overseas territory of Saint Helena)
223	Tunisia – Tunisian Republic
224	Turkey – Republic of Turkey
225	Turkmenistan
226	Turks and Caicos Islands (UK overseas territory)
227	Tuvalu
228	Uganda – Republic of Uganda
229	Ukraine
230	United Arab Emirates
231	United Kingdom – United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
232	United States – United States of America
233	Uruguay – Eastern Republic of Uruguay
234	Uzbekistan – Republic of Uzbekistan
235	Vanuatu – Republic of Vanuatu
236	Vatican City – State of the Vatican City
237	Venezuela – Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela
238	Vietnam – Socialist Republic of Vietnam
239	Virgin Islands, British – British Virgin Islands (UK overseas territory)
240	Virgin Islands, United States – United States Virgin Islands (US)
241	Wallis and Futuna – Territory of Wallis and Futuna Islands (French)
242	Yemen – Republic of Yemen
243	Zambia – Republic of Zambia
244	Zimbabwe – Republic of Zimbabwe
245	Kosovo – Republic of Kosovo

Appendix F: QCA solutions not shown in the main text

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Table F1: QCA parsimonious solution for high coverage of topics of high social relevance

Causal recipe	Strong market competition	Strong ad-dependency (TV system)	Weak PSB position	Commercial ownership	High market research activity	Strong ad-dependency (TV channel)	Raw coverage	Unique coverage	Consistency	TV channels in the causal recipe
1						x	0.51	0.19	0.80	ISR_IBA, TPE_PTS, USA_PBS, GER_ARD, SUI_SF1
2					x		0.18	0.09	1	TPE_PTS, TPE_TVBS
3	x			x			0.36	0	0.87	POL_TVP11, GER_ARD, ITA_RAI1

Table F2: QCA parsimonious solution for low coverage of topics of high social relevance

Causal recipe	Strong market competition	Strong ad-dependency (TV system)	Weak PSB position	Commercial ownership	High market research activity	Strong ad-dependency (TV channel)	Raw coverage	Unique coverage	Consistency	TV channels in the causal recipe
1				✓	✓		0.50	0.14	0.69	CDN_CTV, GER_RTL, ITA_Canal5, POL_TVN, POR_TVI, BEL_VTM, CHI_Mega
2	✓	✓	x				0.44	0.04	0.94	BEL_VRT, BEL_VTM, POR_RTP, POR_TVI
3	✓				✓	✓	0.68	0.13	0.84	BEL_VTM, CDN_CTV, CHI_TVN, CHI_Mega, ISR_Arutz2, POR_RTP, POR_TVI

Table F3: QCA complex solution for high coverage of topics of low social relevance

Causal recipe	Strong market competition	Strong ad-dependency (TV system)	Weak PSB position	Commercial ownership	High market research activity	Strong ad-dependency (TV channel)	Raw coverage	Unique coverage	Consistency	TV channels in the causal recipe
1	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	0.31	0.05	0.79	CDN_CTV, CHI_Mega, TPE_TVBS
2	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	0.50	0.23	0.75	CDN_CBC, CDN_CTV, CHI_TVNI, CHI_Mega
3	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	0.08	0.08	1	GER_RTL

Table F4: QCA parsimonious solution for high coverage of topics of low social relevance

Causal recipe	Strong market competition	Strong ad-dependency (TV system)	Weak PSB position	Commercial ownership	High market research activity	Strong ad-dependency (TV channel)	Raw coverage	Unique coverage	Consistency	TV channels in the causal recipe
1			✓			✓	0.58	0.37	0.68	CDN_CTV, TPE_TVBS, CDN_CBC, CHI_TVNI, CHI_Mega
2		✗		✓			0.22	0	1	GER_RTL
3		✗				✓	0.36	0.03	0.91	GER_RTL

Table F5: QCA complex solution for low coverage of topics of low social relevance

Causal recipe	Strong market competition	Strong ad-dependency (TV system)	Weak PSB position	Commercial ownership	High market research activity	Strong ad-dependency (TV channel)	Raw coverage	Unique coverage	Consistency	TV channels in the causal recipe
1		×	×	×	✓	×	0.18	0.03	1	GER_ARD, SUI_SF1, SUI_TSR
2	✓	✓	✓	×		×	0.25	0.03	1	ISR_IBA, TPE_PTS, USA_PBS
3		✓	×	×	✓	✓	0.29	0.08	0.93	ITA_RAI1, POL_TVP1, POR_RTP
4	✓		×	×	✓	×	0.22	0	1	BEL_VRT, SUI_SF1, SUI_TSR
5	✓	✓		×	✓	×	0.31	0	1	BEL_VRT, ISR_IBA, USA_PBS
6	✓	✓	×	×	✓		0.24	0	0.91	BEL_VRT, POR_RTP

Table F 6: QCA parsimonious solution for low coverage of topics of low social relevance

Causal recipe	Strong market competition	Strong ad-dependency (TV system)	Weak PSB position	Commercial ownership	High market research activity	Strong ad-dependency (TV channel)	Raw coverage	Unique coverage	Consistency	TV channels in the causal recipe
1			×	×			0.46	0.18	0.87	BEL_VRT, GER_ARD, ITA_RAI1, POL_TVP1, POR_RTP, SUI_SF1, SUI_TSR
2						×	0.52	0.25	1	ISR_IBA, TPE_PTS, USA_PBS, BEL_VRT, GER_ARD, SUI_SF1, SUI_TSR

Table F7: QCA complex solution for high topic diversity

Causal recipe	Strong market competition	Strong ad-dependency (TV system)	Weak PSB position	Commercial ownership	High market research activity	Strong ad-dependency (TV channel)	Raw coverage	Unique coverage	Consistency	TV channels in the causal recipe
1	✓		✗	✗	✓	✗	0.27	0.11	1	BEL_VRT, SUI_SF1, SUI_TSR
2		✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	0.34	0.06	0.90	ITA_RAI1, POR_RTP
3	✓	✓		✗	✓	✓	0.39	0.12	0.85	CHI_TVN, POR_RTP
4	✓	✓	✗		✓	✓	0.42	0.12	1	BEL_VTM, POR_RTP, POR_TVI
5	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	0.06	0.04	1	GER_RTL

Table F8: QCA parsimonious solution for high topic diversity

Causal recipe	Strong market competition	Strong ad-dependency (TV system)	Weak PSB position	Commercial ownership	High market research activity	Strong ad-dependency (TV channel)	Raw coverage	Unique coverage	Consistency	TV channels in the causal recipe
1	✓		✗				0.56	0.26	0.95	BEL_VRT, BEL_VTM, POR_RTP, POR_TVI, SUI_SF1, SUI_TSR
2				✗		✓	0.45	0.10	0.77	CHI_TVN, ITA_RAI1, POR_RTP
3		✗		✓			0.17	0	1	GER_RTL
4		✗				✓	0.30	0	1	GER_RTL

Table F9: QCA complex solution for low topic diversity

Causal recipe	Strong market competition	Strong ad-dependency (TV system)	Weak PSB position	Commercial ownership	High market research activity	Strong ad-dependency (TV channel)	Raw coverage	Unique coverage	Consistency	TV channels in the causal recipe
1	✓	✓	✓	✗		✗	0.31	0.04	1	ISR_IBA, TPE_PTS, USA_PBS
2	✓	✓		✗	✓	✗	0.36	0.03	0.90	ISR_IBA, USA_PBS
3	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	0.25	0.04	0.79	CDN_CTV, TPE_TVBS, USA_NBC
4	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗	0.12	0.04	1	GER_ARD
5	✗	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	0.23	0.07	0.78	POL_TVP1
6	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓		0.43	0	0.87	CDN_CBC, ISR_IBA, ISR_Arutz2, USA_PBS
7	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	0.43	0	0.81	CDN_CBC, CDN_CTV, ISR_Arutz2, USA_NBC

Table F10: QCA parsimonious solution for low topic diversity

Causal recipe	Strong market competition	Strong ad-dependency (TV system)	Weak PSB position	Commercial ownership	High market research activity	Strong ad-dependency (TV channel)	Raw coverage	Unique coverage	Consistency	TV channels in the causal recipe
1			✓				0.72	0.36	0.73	CDN_CBC, CDN_CTV, ISR_IBA, ISR_Arutz2, TPE_PTS, TPE_TVBS, USA_PBS, USA_NBC
2	✗			✗			0.33	0.07	0.78	POL_TVP1, GER_ARD
3		✓				✗	0.45	0.03	0.92	USA_PBS, ISR_IBA, TPE_PTS

Table F11: QCA complex solution for high actor diversity

Causal recipe	Strong market competition	Strong ad-dependency (TV system)	Weak PSB position	Commercial ownership	High market research activity	Strong ad-dependency (TV channel)	Raw coverage	Unique coverage	Consistency	TV channels in the causal recipe
1	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓		0.28	0.04	0.91	BEL_VRT, POR_RTP
2	✓	✓	✗		✓	✓	0.39	0.12	0.94	BEL_VTM, POR_RTP, POR_TVI
3	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	0.06	0.06	1	TPE_PTS
4	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	0.06	0.04	1	GER_RTL
5	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	0.09	0.09	1	TPE_TVBS

Table F12: QCA parsimonious solution for high actor diversity

Causal recipe	Strong market competition	Strong ad-dependency (TV system)	Weak PSB position	Commercial ownership	High market research activity	Strong ad-dependency (TV channel)	Raw coverage	Unique coverage	Consistency	TV channels in the causal recipe
1					✗		0.15	0.10	0.85	TPE_PTS, TPE_TVBS
2	✓	✓	✗				0.43	0.30	0.94	BEL_VRT, BEL_VTM, POR_RTP, POR_TVI
3		✗		✓			0.17	0	1	GER_RTL
4		✗				✓	0.27	0.03	0.91	GER_RTL

Table F13: QCA complex solution for low actor diversity

Causal recipe	Strong market competition	Strong ad-dependency (TV system)	Weak PSB position	Commercial ownership	High market research activity	Strong ad-dependency (TV channel)	Raw coverage	Unique coverage	Consistency	TV channels in the causal recipe
1		×	×	×	✓	×	0.19	0.08	0.83	GER_ARD, SUI_SF1
2	✓	✓		×	✓	×	0.36	0.25	0.90	ISR_IBA, USA_PBS
3	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	0.22	0.22	0.77	CDN_CTV, USA_NBC

Table F14: QCA parsimonious solution for low actor diversity

Causal recipe	Strong market competition	Strong ad-dependency (TV system)	Weak PSB position	Commercial ownership	High market research activity	Strong ad-dependency (TV channel)	Raw coverage	Unique coverage	Consistency	TV channels in the causal recipe
1					✓	×	0.49	0.49	0.83	ISR_IBA, USA_PBS, GER_ARD, SUI_SF1
2			✓	✓	✓		0.22	0.22	0.64	CDN_CTV, USA_NBC

Table F15: QCA complex solution for high foreign news coverage

Causal recipe	Strong market competition	Strong ad-dependency (TV system)	Weak PSB position	Commercial ownership	High market research activity	Strong ad-dependency (TV channel)	Raw coverage	Unique coverage	Consistency	TV channels in the causal recipe
1		×	×	×	✓	×	0.21	0.04	1	GER_ARD, SUI_SF1, SUI_TSR
2		✓	×	×	✓	✓	0.34	0.06	0.90	POL_TVP1, POR_RTP
3	✓	✓		×	✓	✓	0.40	0.13	0.87	CDN_CBC, ISR_Arutz2, POR_RTP
4	×	×	×	✓	✓	✓	0.06	0.06	1	GER_RTL
5	✓		×	×	✓	×	0.27	0	1	BEL_VRT, SUI_SF1, SUI_TSR
6	✓	✓	×	×	✓		0.31	0	1	BEL_VRT, POR_RTP

Table F16: QCA parsimonious solution for high foreign news coverage

Causal recipe	Strong market competition	Strong ad-dependency (TV system)	Weak PSB position	Commercial ownership	High market research activity	Strong ad-dependency (TV channel)	Raw coverage	Unique coverage	Consistency	TV channels in the causal recipe
1		×					0.41	0.12	0.88	GER_ARD, GER_RTL, SUI_SF1, SUI_TSR
2				×		✓	0.46	0.07	0.79	CDN_CBC, ISR_Arutz2, POL_TVP1, POR_RTP
3			×			×	0.33	0	1	BEL_VRT, GER_ARD, SUI_SF1, SUI_TSR
4			×	×			0.54	0.05	0.86	BEL_VRT, GER_ARD, POL_TVP1, POR_RTP, SUI_SF1, SUI_TSR

Table F17: QCA complex solution for low foreign news coverage

Causal recipe	Strong market competition	Strong ad-dependency (TV system)	Weak PSB position	Commercial ownership	High market research activity	Strong ad-dependency (TV channel)	Raw coverage	Unique coverage	Consistency	TV channels in the causal recipe
1	✓	✓	✓	✗		✗	0.25	0.25	0.82	ISR_IBA, TPE_PTS, USA_PBS
2		✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	0.31	0.26	0.85	ITA_Canale5, POL_TVN, BEL_VTM, POR_TVI
3	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	0.25	0.19	0.79	CHI_Mega, TPE_TVBS, USA_NBC

Table F18: QCA parsimonious solution for low foreign news coverage

Causal recipe	Strong market competition	Strong ad-dependency (TV system)	Weak PSB position	Commercial ownership	High market research activity	Strong ad-dependency (TV channel)	Raw coverage	Unique coverage	Consistency	TV channels in the causal recipe
1			✓			✗	0.28	0.28	0.71	ISR_IBA, TPE_PTS, USA_PBS
2		✓		✓			0.54	0.54	0.78	ITA_Canale5, POL_TVN, POR_TVI, USA_NBC, BEL_VTM, CHI_Mega, TPE_TVBS

Table F19: QCA complex solution of high diversity regarding countries in foreign news

Causal recipe	Strong market competition	Strong ad-dependency (TV system)	Weak PSB position	Commercial ownership	High market research activity	Strong ad-dependency (TV channel)	Raw coverage	Unique coverage	Consistency	TV channels in the causal recipe
1		×	×	×	✓	×	0.21	0.03	1	GER_ARD, SUI_SF1, SUI_TSR
2		✓	×	×	✓	✓	0.36	0.09	1	ITA_RAI1, POL_TVP1, POR_RTP
3	✓	✓	×		✓	✓	0.41	0.12	1	BEL_VTM, POR_RTP, POR_TVI
4	×	×	×	✓	✓	✓	0.06	0.03	1	GER_RTL
5	✓		×	×	✓	×	0.26	0	1	BEL_VRT, SUI_SF1, SUI_TSR
6	✓	✓	×	×	✓		0.30	0	1	BEL_VRT, POR_RTP

Table F20: QCA parsimonious solution of high diversity regarding countries in foreign news

Causal recipe	Strong market competition	Strong ad-dependency (TV system)	Weak PSB position	Commercial ownership	High market research activity	Strong ad-dependency (TV channel)	Raw coverage	Unique coverage	Consistency	TV channels in the causal recipe
1		×					0.39	0.11	0.88	GER_ARD, GER_RTL, SUI_SF1, SUI_TSR
2	✓		×				0.54	0.12	0.95	BEL_VRT, BEL_VTM, POR_RTP, POR_TVI, SUI_SF1, SUI_TSR
3			×	×			0.55	0.03	0.91	BEL_VRT, GER_ARD, ITA_RAI1, POL_TVP1, POR_RTP, SUI_SF1, SUI_TSR
4	×			×			0.33	0.00	0.87	POL_TVP1, GER_ARD, ITA_RAI1

Table F21: QCA complex solution of low diversity regarding countries in foreign news

Causal recipe	Strong market competition	Strong ad-dependency (TV system)	Weak PSB position	Commercial ownership	High market research activity	Strong ad-dependency (TV channel)	Raw coverage	Unique coverage	Consistency	TV channels in the causal recipe
1	✓	✓	✓	✗		✗	0.29	0.04	0.91	ISR_IBA, TPE_PTS, USA_PBS
2	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	0.33	0.04	1	CDN_CTV, CHI_Mega, TPE_TVBS, USA_NBC
3	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓		0.45	0	0.87	CDN_CBC, ISR_IBA, ISR_Arutz2, USA_PBS
4	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	0.49	0	0.88	CDN_CBC, CDN_CTV, CHI_Mega, ISR_Arutz2, USA_NBC

Table F22: QCA parsimonious solution of low diversity regarding countries in foreign news

Causal recipe	Strong market competition	Strong ad-dependency (TV system)	Weak PSB position	Commercial ownership	High market research activity	Strong ad-dependency (TV channel)	Raw coverage	Unique coverage	Consistency	TV channels in the causal recipe
1			✓				0.82	0.82	0.79	CDN_CBC, CDN_CTV, ISR_IBA, ISR_Arutz2, TPE_PTS, TPE_TVBS, USA_PBS, USA_NBC, CHI_Mega

Table F23: QCA complex solution for high sensationalist reporting

Causal recipe	Strong market competition	Strong ad-dependency (TV system)	Weak PSB position	Commercial ownership	High market research activity	Strong ad-dependency (TV channel)	Raw coverage	Unique coverage	Consistency	TV channels in the causal recipe
1	✓	✓			✓	✓	0.72	0.41	0.87	BEL_VTM, CDN_CBC, CDN_CTV, CHI_TVNI, CHI_Mega, ISR_Arutz2, USA_NBC
2	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	0.32	0.04	1	CDN_CTV, CHI_Mega, TPE_TVBS, USA_NBC
3	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	0.07	0.04	1	GER_RTL

Table F24: QCA parsimonious solution for high sensationalist reporting

Causal recipe	Strong market competition	Strong ad-dependency (TV system)	Weak PSB position	Commercial ownership	High market research activity	Strong ad-dependency (TV channel)	Raw coverage	Unique coverage	Consistency	TV channels in the causal recipe
1	✓					✓	0.75	0.50	0.80	BEL_VTM, ISR_Arutz2, TPE_TVBS, CDN_CBC, CDN_CTV, CHI_TVNI, CHI_Mega, USA_NBC
2		✗		✓			0.18	0	1	GER_RTL
3		✗				✓	0.29	0	0.91	GER_RTL

Table F25: QCA complex solution for low sensationalist reporting

Causal recipe	Strong market competition	Strong ad-dependency (TV system)	Weak PSB position	Commercial ownership	High market research activity	Strong ad-dependency (TV channel)	Raw coverage	Unique coverage	Consistency	TV channels in the causal recipe
1		×	×	×	✓	×	0.21	0.04	1	GER_ARD, SUI_SF1, SUI_TSR
2	✓	✓	✓	×		×	0.29	0.04	1	ISR_IBA, TPE_PTS, USA_PBS
3		✓	×	×	✓	✓	0.34	0.10	0.93	ITA_RAI1, POL_TVP1, POR_RTP
4	✓		×	×	✓	×	0.26	0	1.00	BEL_VRT, SUI_SF1, SUI_TSR
5	✓	✓		×	✓	×	0.37	0	1	BEL_VRT, ISR_IBA, USA_PBS
6	✓	✓	×	×	✓		0.28	0	0.91	BEL_VRT, POR_RTP

Table F26: QCA parsimonious solution for low sensationalist reporting

Causal recipe	Strong market competition	Strong ad-dependency (TV system)	Weak PSB position	Commercial ownership	High market research activity	Strong ad-dependency (TV channel)	Raw coverage	Unique coverage	Consistency	TV channels in the causal recipe
1						×	0.56	0.24	0.91	ISR_IBA, TPE_PTS, USA_PBS, BEL_VRT, GER_ARD, SUI_SF1, SUI_TSR
2			×	×			0.51	0.18	0.83	BEL_VRT, GER_ARD, ITA_RAI1, POL_TVP1, POR_RTP, SUI_SF1, SUI_TSR

Curriculum Vitae

EMPLOYMENT HISTORY

- Sep 2007 – June 2010 Teaching and research associate at the Institute of Mass Communication and Media Research, University of Zurich, Switzerland
- May 2007 – July 2007 Postgraduate intern, Roland Berger Strategy Consultants, Munich, Germany
- Oct 2006 – Apr 2007 Junior consultant for information technology and telecommunications, TNS Infratest, Munich, Germany
- Oct 2002 – Mar 2006 Teaching assistant for statistics at the Institute for Media and Communication Studies, Free University Berlin, Germany
- Sep 2003 – June 2004 Research assistant at the Department of Communication, University of Washington, Seattle, USA

EDUCATION

- Sep 2007 - Feb 2010 Doctoral candidate at the Institute of Mass Communication and Media Research, University of Zurich, Switzerland; dissertation accepted in spring semester 2010 with "*insigni cum laude*"
- Sep 2000 – Feb 2006 Student at the Institute for Media and Communication Studies, Free University Berlin, Germany (Magister Artium)
- Major: Media and Communication Studies
- Minors: China studies and Sociology
- Sep 2003 – June 2004 Visiting graduate student at Department of Communication, University of Washington, Seattle, USA
- 1993 – 2000 Student at Wieland-Herzfelde-Oberschule, Berlin, Germany (A-levels)

GRANTS AND AWARDS

- April 2009 Grant for a research stay at Fordham University, New York (by the Faculty Mentoring of the University Zurich)
- June 2006 Master's thesis award by *Verein der Freunde der Publizistik e. V.*
- Nov 2001 – Feb 2006 Grant by the Friedrich-Ebert-Foundation
- Sep 2003 – Juni 2004 Grant by the exchange programme between Free University Berlin and University of Washington, Seattle, USA
- Sep 2003 Ernst Reuter scholarship of Free University Berlin